

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF KASHMIR SERIES

KASHMIR SOCIETY AND CULTURE



Editors
Suresh K Sharma
S R Bakshi

The volume—*Kashmir Society and Culture* presents, for the first time, a descriptive account of the various aspects of Kashmir and its people, customs, cultural heritage, folk-lore/tales, etc. It is hoped that the present volume will be liked by everyone interested in the Kashmir Society and Culture.

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ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF KASHMIR SERIES-9

Kashmir Society and Culture

Edited by
Suresh K. Sharma & S.R. Bakshi

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Preface

The picturesque valley of Kashmir situated on the northern extremity of India, occupies a position of unique and strategic importance in the sub-continent of India. It excels in beauty, art, architecture, culture and tradition, rivers, mountains, flora and fauna than several regions of the world. So far so, some eminent writers have compared this Himalayan range with that of Switzerland. Whereas, Kashmir bore the pangs of various onslaughts from North-West, Switzerland enjoyed peaceful postures for centuries.

In this volume an attempt has been made to capture the charms and beauty of Kashmir through an analytical study of its Society and Culture.

We have collected the material from several libraries and some of them are—Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Indian Council of World Affairs Library, Gandhi National Museum and Library, Indian Council of Historical Research Library, University of Delhi Library, etc.

We feel much beholden to the authorities of these institutions for their academic support during our researches.

Finally, we owe a deep sense of admiration for Usha Sharma, Jyotsna Tewari, Gagan, Shilpa and Naresh with regard to their constant help provided in many ways.

Editors
Suresh K. Sharma
S.R. Bakshi

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CHAPTER 1

KASHMIR AND ITS PEOPLE

In all the arguments and controversies, and the interplay of international politics, there is a tendency to forget the people of Kashmir. They suffered oppression and repression at the hands of an autocratic regime and as the majority community, the worst sufferers were the Muslims themselves; the Muslim League, however, showed no sympathy for them in their struggle. After the partition of India, the interest shown by Pakistan was based on aggrandisement; for the raiders sent by Pakistan looted, ravaged and violated Muslim homes with a view to adding a slice of territory to the newly-founded State of Pakistan. Even later, the argument of the rivers implied the interest of Pakistan, not of the people of Kashmir.

Opportunities have been afforded to the people of Kashmir on the Indian side to develop a democratic system of government and establish a regime of economic and social justice. Under what Pakistan chooses to call a Hindu India, the rule of the Hindu Dogra dynasty has been abolished. Feudal landlordism which benefited largely a Hindu oligarchy has also been abolished, and, unlike what India did for itself, its abolition in Kashmir went without compensation even though compensation is inescapable under the Indian Constitution. In place of the Hindu dynasty and landlordism, a democratic order has been substituted by the will of the people of Kashmir themselves. The majority of them continue to be Muslims and they give strength and faith to the concept of a secular State enshrined in the Constitution of India.

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The magnitude of the land reform can be understood by reference to the following provisions of Kashmir's abolition of Big Landed Estates Act:

- (i) no one who is not an actual cultivator is entitled to own more than 23 acres of land;
- (ii) the remaining land of every proprietor is transferred in ownership right to the peasant to the extent of his possession;
- (iii) the land, in excess of 23 acres and not being cultivated by tenants, will vest in the State to be used for settling landless labourers.

Thus, 563,500 acres of land were transferred to the tillers automatically, cancelling all rights of the old proprietors, a substantial number of whom were Hindus. Even earlier in 1950, the Kashmir Government had introduced a far-reaching measure to relieve the peasantry and the urban poor of the crushing burden of indebtedness. The Distressed Debtors Relief Act prescribed that when the debtor had repaid the principal plus 50 per cent in the form of interest the debt would be automatically discharged. Any amount paid in excess of 150 per cent was to be refunded to the debtors. The success of this measure could be assessed by the number of applications for relief. By 1953, these applications numbered 48,195 involving a total debt of Rs. 11,122,054.

The reorganisation of educational, health and medical facilities has been no less far-reaching. These reforms helped to revive the life of the people which the unsettlement caused by Pakistan's invasion had so completely shattered. During the last two years, a large network of irrigation canals has been constructed. Large electrical powerhouses have been installed. Trade and tourism have revived and the arts and crafts of Kashmir have come into their own. Life has revived in Kashmir; there is a sense of purpose among the people.

While Pakistan shouts in terms of religious fanaticism, and is accumulating arms, the people of Kashmir, on the Indian side, as the people of India, are concentrating on giving that economic and social content to their freedom without which freedom itself has little meaning.

(Kashmir-A Factual Survey)

CHAPTER 2

CHARACTER OF THE KASHMIRIS

By

C.E. Tyndale Biscoe

To write about the character of the Kashmiris is not easy, as the country of Kashmir, including the province of Jammu, is large and contains many races of people. Then, again, these various countries included under the name of Kashmir are separated the one from the other by high mountain passes, so that the people of these various states differ considerably the one from the other in features, manners, customs, language, character and religion.

The people of Jammu province are Dogras, cousins of the Rajputs, and talk Punjabi. As their country is on the lower slopes of the mountains, and not in the plains, the people are a sturdy race and good fighters. The Maharajah's army is chiefly composed of these men, and our Indian army contains many Dogra regiments. The Kashmiri Dogra regiments behaved splendidly in the East African campaign, and won a great name for themselves. Jammu is the winter capital of his Highness Sir Pratab Singh, K.C.S.I., etc., Maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir, and not to be confused with Sir Pratab Singh, Maharajah of Idar, whose name and picture figured so often in the papers during the war. This town is situated on the top of a high cliff overlooking the River Ravi, a most imposing-looking town from a distance on account of its many temple domes sparkling in the bright sunlight. Jammu is strongly Hindu. The late Maharajah wished to make his capital a second Benares, which

is the Mecca of the Hindus. The Dogras are Kishatrias, or the soldier caste, next below the Brahmans in caste. The people of Poonch state are very similar in build and physique to the Dogras; they are sturdy mountaineers. Poonch state gave more recruits for the Indian army than any other part of the Indian Empire. They are Mohammedans. The people in the country of Ladakh, or Lesser Tibet, are Mongolians, and Buddhists by religion, sturdy, hardworking and cheery people.

I have already mentioned the inhabitants of the mountains on the frontier, so now, having cleared the ground somewhat, we can discuss the character of the inhabitants of the valley. It is with these people that the Europeans who visit country are chiefly concerned: servants, coolies, boatmen, shopkeepers, clerks, merchants, etc.

So when people speak of the Kashmiri they have these particular classes of people in their minds. To call a man a "Kashmiri" is a term of abuse, for it stands for a coward and a rogue, and much else of an unpleasant nature. For instance, when giving a servant a character, a man whom you are dismissing and could not possibly recommend, you write: "This man is a good specimen of a Kashmiri." Everyone understands that such a man is not fit for employment.

I had written a character for an unsatisfactory scholar who bothered me for a "chit." I wrote in it that this young man was an excellent specimen of a Kashmiri Pandit. A few days later his elder brother called upon me and begged me to write another chit for his brother as he could not obtain employment with that chit. On asking him his reason for thinking so, he said: "You have written that 'he is an excellent specimen of a Kashmiri Pandit.' Everyone knows the meaning of this and will not employ him." So I answered his request, and in place I wrote, "This young man has a slice of the 'reynard' in him". So the brother left comforted.

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I hate having to write thus of the Kashmiri, as I am really very fond of him. I can name scores as my friends. Many have stood by me in dangers and difficulties, and a few have suffered for me, and I know many who have risked their lives in saving life, from drowning and other causes, so that I look upon them as heroes and true gentlemen, and all the more so on account of their adverse surroundings and environments. Yet, to be truthful, and I do not believe in writing lies, I must say that the ordinary Kashmiri such as I have known for thirty years is a coward, a man with no self-respect and deceitful to a degree, and I perhaps may write with a clear conscience, for I have told this to all classes of them to their faces times without number, and, to give them all credit, they never resent it, because they know it is true. Instances of cowardice, deceit and villainy I could give ad nauseam, and so can everyone who knows Kashmir.

But why are they so different from the people living around them? Because they happen to live in one of the most beautiful countries on earth, and therefore other people have coveted it. Kashmir has been conquered and reconquered by invaders, who have murdered, oppressed and enslaved their ancestors, and so ground the life and heart out of them that their better selves have been crushed. It is quite possible that if we Britishers had had to undergo what the Kashmiris have suffered in the past we might have lost our manhood. I recall instances in my own school life when boys have been severely bullied and so lost their manhood, for their better self had been crushed out of them. But, thank God, it has been otherwise with us and other Western nations, for to us instead has been given the opportunity of helping some of the weaker peoples of the world, and the Kashmiri among them. May we ever be true to our trust.

Gradually are the Kashmiris rising from slavery to manhood, though the growth is naturally very slow at present, but they are on the upward road; I shall later on prove to you that

are long they will find themselves, and I trust become once more a brave people, as they were in the days of old when their own kings led them forth to battle.

I am writing of things as they are, and hence I shall have to speak unpleasant truths maybe, for I am no believer in veiling the truth or playing to the gallery.

The Kashmiris have a virtue, a very important one—viz. the saving grace of humour. Sir Walter Lawrence, who was such a blessing to the tillers of the soil when he was the Land Commissioner thirty years ago, was on tour in the district, and on entering a village he saw a man standing on his head. On asking him the reason for taking that uncomfortable position, the man said that his family matters were in such an utter muddle that he did not know whether he was standing on his head or on his feet. I did not hear the end of the story, but I feel certain that the Commissioner Sahib put him right side up and helped him to find himself, for he had great sympathy with these downtrodden cultivators of the soil. They are all Mohammedans, and all the officials in those days were Hindus.

My wife and I were travelling one summer in the valley and having arrived at a village toward evening we pitched our tents. Then we sent for the "Chowkidar" of the village to ask him to supply us with the usual necessities, the most important being milk for our baby boy, who was making his wants known in the manner usual to babies. The Chowkidar appeared carrying his spear with a flag upon it, this being his wand of office. I told him of our needs, and asked him to let us have some milk for the child as soon as possible. He answered, saying that he was very sorry but there was not a drop of milk in the village. So I asked him what the babies of his village drank, and he said: "They always drink water." So I told him not to be a fool, but to bring the milk. He answered: "How can I, for there are no cows in the village?" At that moment I happened to catch sight of one of the cow tribe feeding on the vil-

lage green. I said to him: "What animal is that?" pointing to it. "Can it be a bear?" "No, Sahib," said he, "it is not a bear, it is a cow; but all our cows are out of milk." I then said to him: "Well, what about eggs?" To this he replied: "There are no hens in the village." At that moment a cock crew, so I asked him: "What noise is that? Is that the voice of an eagle?" "No," said he. "True, O Sahib, it is a cock's voice." "Well, then, be off quick and bring us eggs." "I am very sorry," said he, "I cannot do that either, for all the fowl in this village happen to be cocks." And he added: "We have nothing in this village."

By this time I was getting impatient, as our baby boy was crying and my wife anxious to give him his tea, so I said to the Chowkidar: "Look, what bird is that?" pointing up to a kite soaring overhead. As his eyes went aloft I seized the spear out of his hand and turned it on that part of his person which he uses when he happens to sit down, saying at the same time: "Milk! Eggs!" The scene changed immediately, for the Chowkidar was off at full speed to the village, shouting "blue murder," and I hard at his heels until we entered the village gate, where I posted myself with the spear and told him to look sharp. I had not long to wait, for within ten minutes he was back, loaded with milk, eggs and chickens, and grinning from ear to ear as he motioned me to return to the camp, whilst he came on behind carrying the provender, so immediately all was peace and happiness. The baby enjoyed his tea, my wife's anxiety was dissipated, the Chowkidar and I laughed together over our little contretemps, and all went like a marriage bell whilst we remained under the trees of that village, for the Chowkidar and I understood one another.

On a country road leading up a short, steep hill I overtook a party of fourteen coolies carrying sacks of grain on their backs. They were evidently very tired, for they were groaning as they trudged along; it was towards evening and they had been at this hard labour all day. So I went up to one of them who was an undersized man who seemed to be more fagged

than the rest, and asked him if he was tired. He said: "Yes, very tired and ready to die, if not already dead." So I told him to get on my back, as I would carry him on my back up the hill. He stared at me, opening his mouth and eyes very wide, and shook his head. However, I insisted, and made him get on my back with his load, for I was then young and fit. I carried him to the top of the hill and then deposited him and his load, whereupon the whole gang, who had trudged up the hill with me, put their loads on their cross-bar sticks behind, placed their legs apart and roared with laughter, and when they had recovered their winds started off again, laughing loudly, and continued to do so till out of hearing, their tiredness forgotten. Kashmiris can laugh, and it does one good to hear them.

When a Kashmiri slips up and falls in the street he will as often as not join in the laughter of those around. I think it is a fact that we always feel inclined to laugh when we see a human fall, but never when an animal does so, and not so often when we ourselves come down a cropper.

Now that we have seen a little into the insides of the Kashmiris, we will visit their great town, and see them at their daily occupations, and their ordinary everyday life on the river and in the streets.

Srinagar, or Sirinagar, which means "the City of Wealth," is a most picturesque town, stretching for three miles on both sides of the River Jhelum, the divided town being united by seven bridges.

The usual remark of visitors when they approach the city by river is that it looks like a town that has been bombarded, or has suffered from earthquake, as so many of the buildings are off the straight, and many more are in sad need of repair.

I always believe, when visiting a new place, in ascending a height near by in order to secure a bird's-eye view of the place

and to pick up one's bearings. Such a place is at hand, a rocky hill 1000 feet high, distant from the city about one and a half miles, called Takht-i-Suliman, or, in plain English, the throne of Solomon, known to the Hindus as Shankara Charaya, or the holy mountain. On the top of this hill is a very ancient Hindu temple; it was built by Raja Sandiman, who ruled Kashmir during the period 2629-2564 B.C. It was repaired by Gopaditya (426-365 B.C.) and Lalitaditya (A.D. 697-734) and other later kings. Sikandar did not destroy it because Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni had offered his prayers in it.

From this perch of 1000 feet you obtain a splendid view of the valley, stretching in its breadth twenty miles to the south, right up to the Pir Punjal Mountains, that great wall of rock running up to peaks of 1500 and 1600 feet, the dividing wall between Kashmir and the Punjab.

In length you see about fifty miles up east and fifty miles down the river west. The winding Jhelum river catches your eye glittering in the bright sunlight, with its loops and turns, which is said to have given the idea of the Kashmir pattern on the famous shawls. Just below your feet, on the south, lies the European quarter, called the Munshi Bagh, where are the official houses and the church. Following the river downwards you see the European Club, then the Residency in its beautifully wooded grounds. Farther on you see the Post Office, Cox & Co.'s Bank, the Alliance Bank of Simla, and European agencies, and shops, till you come to the Sheikh Bagh, where are houses of the missionaries, the European cemetery and the former Residency where dwelt Sir John Lawrence and General John Nicholson when they were British Agents in Kashmir. Then the river takes its last bend before entering the city.

Now starting again looking west, at the foot of the hill is the famous Mission Hospital, then open ground which includes the golf course, polo and cricket grounds and the well-managed hotel of Nedou & Sons, the Roman Catholic chapel where the

much-respected Father Boland resides, and farther on the State College in its extensive grounds. The various roads are well marked by their avenues of tall poplar-trees interspersed here and there with chinars, and then the city in the distance stretching right and left along the river, attractive on account of its mosque minarets and Hindu temples with their roofs, which are a cross between a spire and a dome, sparkling like silver in the sunlight, though the would-be silver is generally kerosene oil tins, or Huntley & Palmer's biscuit tins, flattened out.

On the north side, at your feet, lies the city lake called the Dal, ever beautiful at whatever time of the year you view it. Perhaps the springtime is the most beautiful, when you see the yellow mustard-fields interspersed with the pink blossom of the peach and apricot trees, and surrounded by the vivid greens of the reeds and rushes, willow and poplar trees, backed up by the blue mountains crested with snow, all these colours reflected in the clear waters of the lake. One always finds it most difficult to tear oneself away from that glorious view.

Looking across the lake, and rising as it were out of it, on the east side, is a rocky hill about 700 feet in height, called Hari Parbat. On the top stands a large Sikh fort, which frowns over the city, and is used for State prisoners like the Tower of London. From this fort we look daily for the correct time, as a gun fires at midday, at ten o'clock at night and 4 A.M. in the morning.

The ten o'clock gun is the curfew, and all good citizens are supposed to be in bed, and no one is allowed to cross the bridges in the city after gunfire. The morning gun awakens all good Mohammedans for their morning prayers.

The Hindus of Kashmir call Hari Parbat Sharika, and the Mohammedans Koh-i-maran. The following is the legend concerning this hill:-

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In ancient times the people of Kashmir were very much troubled by the Daityas, or monsters who came up from the nether regions through a hole at this spot. So they prayed to their gods to save them from this nuisance, and in answer to their prayers the wife of Shiva, named Durga, came to their assistance. She transformed herself into a sharika—i.e. a maina—a very common bird in Kashmir about the size of a blackbird. It has an unpleasant note not unlike the squeaking of a wheelbarrow, though it can be taught to whistle and talk.

She then descended to the nether regions and broke off a piece of Meru, the sacred mountain in that country, and carried it in her beak and dropped it on to the top of this vent-hole of Hades and so bottled up all the Daityas, and thus saved the people of Kashmir from further trouble.

This hill, therefore, is the Olympus of the Hindus of Kashmir and has been worshipped from time immemorial. Its eastern slopes are now occupied by the ziarats of Makhdum Sahib and Akhun Mala Shah. It is probable that Mohammedan shrines have here taken the place of Hindu religious buildings, just as on so many other old sacred sites in Kashmir.

Close to the foot of the southern extremity of the hill is a rock which from ancient times has been worshipped as an embodiment of Maha Ganisha (the elephant god). It is said that when Pravarasena laid the foundation of his new capital (Srinagar) the god, from regard for the pious king, turned his face from west to east so as to behold and bless the new city. The rock is now covered with so thick a layer of red paint that it is not possible to trace any resemblance to the head or face of the elephant god, still less to see whether it is turned west or east. The later Hindu chroniclers relate that the god, from disgust at the iconoclasm of Sikandar Butshikan, has finally turned his back on the city, and hence his face cannot be seen.

There is nothing in the traditional writings of the locality that would lead us to assume that the hill of Sharika was ever fortified in Hindu times. The present fort that crowns the summit of the hill was built by Ata Mohammed Khan in 1810. From time to time there have been skirmishes between the rival princes round this fort. But battles were fought at the commencement of the Dogra regime during the time of Maharajah Ghulab Singh, and before that at the time when Ranjit Singh's generals finally routed the army of Jabar Khan and drove him out of the country.

The great stone wall which encloses the hill and the ground around its foot was built by Akbar in 1590, as an inscription still extant over the main gate proclaims.

The city from this point is a most quaint sight, especially in the springtime, for it gives one the impression of a vast green field cut up in small patches divided by dark irregular lines. The roofs are covered with green grass, and certain of them are scarlet with poppies or tulips, the streets and alleys making the crooked dividing lines. Sometimes the delusion is increased when one sees sheep and goats feeding on these airy pastures; I have even seen cows on their exalted pasturage. Then one notices that none of the houses have chimneys, the roofs have not such a steep slope as tiled or slated houses have, hence the delusion of their being fields is all the greater. Formerly the roofs were mostly thatched with rice stalks or reeds from the lake, but this fashion was the cause of such disastrous fires that the authorities will not permit any new house to have a thatched roof, so, as most of the thatched houses have been burnt out, all the roofs you now see are of mud for their top surface, and hence the grass and flowers.

The roofs are made thus: over the roof rafters are placed planks, and upon the planks are spread sheets of birch bark, which is most durable, and above the birch bark is spread wet earth three to six inches thick to keep the bark in its place. This

birch bark is like paper; it comes off the trees in closely compressed layers much after the consistency of cardboard.

This birch bark has been used for ages in lieu of paper; the books of old were made of this, and even now many shopmen keep their accounts upon it, and always use it for wrapping up their wares which they sell to their customers.

The drawback to these mud roofs is that they are very heavy, and especially so when there is a heavy fall of snow followed by rain in the night. The sodden snow becomes so weighted that the roof falls in, with fatal results to the house and sleeping inhabitants; therefore every house possesses a trap-door on the roof, so that those in the house may be able to shovel the snow off into the streets, and as often as not on to the heads of those who walk in them. The house roofs are used for several purposes, amongst them as a drying-place for rice and fruits, and when in the autumn red chillies are in full view there is a fine show of colour. Then the Mohammedans use their roofs for prayer, as it is their custom to choose vantage points where they can be seen at prayer.

I was present at a big fire in the city when a mosque was in danger. The mullah, an old man with a long grey beard, climbed on to the roof of the mosque with his Koran, from which he commenced to read aloud, and earnestly hoped thereby to save his mosque. But it was of no avail, for he was obliged to take refuge on another roof, and then on to another, as the heat, smoke and fire drove him from one vantage point to another. It was a noble effort nevertheless, and grand to see the old man's pluck and faith in the midst of disaster. The heat of the fire seemed to create a great wind, so that his long grey beard was blown about like a flag, and his earnest old face lit up by the flames, and one could at times hear his voice above the roar of the flames rolling out in Arabic verse after verse from his sacred book. Arabic being the sacred language of the Mohammedans, the Koran must be read only in that language.

Having seen the city from above, we will now come right into it and view it from the river. We will take a boat and follow the river under the seven bridges.

Our boat is one of the many small boats called "shikaras" which ply for hire. It is about thirty feet long, something like a long narrow punt with long pointed ends, the bows sharper than the stern, both ends rising gradually out of the water. They are most extraordinarily easy boats to steer, as they draw very little water bow and stern, their deepest draught being near the centre of the boat, hence they can be made to spin round and round on their centre with ease. This easy handling of the craft is most useful in a crowded river. These boats are usually propelled by three or four men with paddles, the blade being the shape of a lotus leaf or a heart. The crew sit in the stern of the boat facing the way they are travelling; the passengers recline in the centre of the boat, with an awning of matting over their heads to protect them from the sun or rain.

The first bridge under which we pass is a modern structure of five arches, the piers built of solid masonry. This bridge some twenty-five years ago displaced one of the old cantilever bridges made of deodar or cedar logs, which was at one time covered with houses and shops, not unlike Old London Bridge. These bridges were introduced into Kashmir by Alexander the Great's officers, and most excellent bridges for wear they have proved themselves to be.

Just below this bridge on the left bank is the palace of his Highness the Maharajah—a great pile of buildings interesting in their way, but not exactly beautiful. Under the palace and on the opposite side of the river are his Highness' barges, chiefly built for the ladies of his zenana when they travel the river part of the journey from Jammu to Srinagar, and vice versa. The state barge is a handsome craft with much scarlet and gold paint, with seats for sixty paddlers. There are also smaller state

boats called "parindas," or birds, with seats for thirty paddlers, which are used for short trips, and very smart they look with the scarlet top awning and the thirty paddlers in scarlet uniforms paddling as they do in perfect time to the cry of their captain. He stands up on the foot-board in glorious apparel of scarlet and gold, giving his orders to the crew as to time and stroke, for the strokes are many and varied, and some with great flourish of paddles raised on high, accompanied with much water display. Moored to the bank opposite the palace is an elegant steam launch presented to his Highness by Queen Victoria, also a modern fast motor launch from Thornycroft's. Below where these boats are moored is a handsome flight of stone steps leading to a memorial stone raised to the later Maharajah; below this again is the State Telegraph Office, which can be amusing as well as annoying at times.

On one occasion I went to the office to lodge a complaint on account of a telegram that I had sent to a friend which did not reach him for a day after he had received a letter that I had sent him at the same time. The official tried to comfort me by saying that if I found that the post travelled quicker than telegraph he would advise my making use of the post instead of the telegraph wires. I can remember the time when we could not even feel quite happy when making use of the post office when the Kashmiri stamps were in use. A friend of mine wishing me to send him used Kashmiri stamps, I directed and posted to myself thirty Kashmir post cards, out of which lot only three reached me to send to my friend, as other people besides my friend evidently wanted Kashmiri stamped post cards.

In those days if you wished your letters to reach your friends who lived in Kashmir it was wiser not to put stamps on them, for the postman in his efforts to annex the stamp sometimes made a mess of the envelope and therefore thought it wiser not to deliver it, but if it was not stamped the receiver had to pay double postage, which was profitable to the postal

authorities. In those days I bought several sets of old issue stamps, thinking they would be valuable later on, but when I wished to give or sell them to collectors I was informed that they were reprints. So certain people connected with the Post Office must have amassed some wealth in printing off old issues from the ancient dies.

I fear Kashmiri stamps must have caused stamp collectors a good deal of heart-searchings from the method adopted in making those stamps. The stamp-maker would have sheets of paper, pots of paint and a brush with which to colour the paper. As the pot of paint became emptied he would fill up the pot with water, so that, supposing he was making red stamps, the first sheets would be a brilliant red, which would gradually become very faint until more paint was put into the pot to thicken it up. Thus it came to pass that stamp collectors are very chary about accepting Kashmir stamps. A friend of mine had collected a great many Kashmir stamps, and took them home to a stamp dealer, expecting to make a small fortune. The dealer looked at them carefully and then asked him to come to his inner room, the walls of which were papered with stamps which were forgeries. Pointing to the wall, he said: "If I take your Kashmir stamps, that is the only use I can make of them."

In those past years the business of making forged or reprint stamps was so great that a law was made to the effect that any Kashmiri found selling Kashmir stamps would be punished by imprisonment; and certain gentlemen who persisted in this fraud were put under lock and key, and so given time to think whether it was worth while carrying on this particular business. I think they must have come to the conclusion that it was not, for now it is not easy to find Kashmir stamp vendors.

Outside that State Telegraph Office and all down the river on both banks are lines of boats of all sizes moored, from the small shikaras propelled by one paddler, who may be a little

boy or girl (for they commence their art at an early age), to the large barges in which are cargoes of rice and timber.

Families live in all the larger craft, and there is much to interest the traveller, whether he be a new-comer or a resident. It is always entertaining, for the boats are crowded with life of all sorts, from the lord and master of the family and captain of the boat to that irritating creature called a flea.

When the boats are moored you generally see the men of the boat sitting in the stern and smoking their hookahs, or playing with the small children, whilst their women-folk are at work, the old grandmother at her spinning-wheel, and the younger women preparing the food. This to the passer-by seems always to be in the preparing "i.e. pounding the rice on the bank with the heavy pestle. Others scare off the fowls and sparrows which are watching their opportunity to feed off the rice that is spread out on rush mats to dry in the sun. Others, again, are with their long-handled wooden spoons ladling the water out of the germ-infected river into the rice-pot that is on the clay stove in the boat. These women on the bank are now shouting loudly and gesticulating with their arms and cloths to frighten away a kite which has taken a fancy to some young chickens, and at that moment has made a swoop for them, whilst their mother is calling aloud to her offspring to take shelter under her wings. The kite, having been balked this time, flies back to its high branch of a tree near by to await a more favourable opportunity, and the women resume their preparations for the meal. They have not been long at peace when they are called to action again, for a hungry pariah dog which has been sniffing with his nose in the air behind a stack of wood, and has discovered that there is something interesting in the boat, has stalked cleverly to the boat and is about to seize a piece of goat hanging on a wooden hook from the roof of the boat. All is uproar and rush again, but the meat has been saved, and the dog slinks off with his tail between his legs, disappointed, but not disheartened, for he has more patience and

persistence than those who walk on two feet; he goes off and lies down in a secluded spot and pretends to be asleep, but he is not.

All is peace and quiet again, so much so that a little flash of beauty settles on one of the poles sticking out from the boat, it is a king of poachers, the blue and green kingfisher. His powerful little eye has seen the flash of silver in the shallow water close to the bank. In an instant he has disappeared head-first into the water and comes up conqueror to the pole with a wriggling little fish, which he gradually works round, end on, head-first into his beak, then a big swallow or two and the fish has gone to help his enemy to be strong to catch more of her family. I have always noticed that kingfishers are far more successful in securing their dinners than kites, and are certainly in better condition than the poor pariah dogs.

We must now switch our eyes off animal life and come back to our boatman's family. The lord and master of the family and captain of the boat, who has been quietly smoking and thinking thoughts, whilst the women are preparing his meal amid the usual daily excitement, is now aroused to anger as an old enemy of his in a passing boat reminds him of some unpleasant conversation they had had when last they met; past insults are raked up and curses on female relatives exchanged. Now a noisy battle of words has commenced, which soon resolves itself into a babel of voices, for the women of both boats have joined in with a will, and their shrill voices are heard well above those of the menfolk.

The preparations for the meal are forgotten as the crews of both boats are standing up and gesticulating with their arms and clenched fists. To the new-comer all this sounds terrible and looks as if a battle royal was imminent, with much shedding of blood; but there is no fear of this, for of all the many boatman fights that I have witnessed I have

never seen one boatman hit another; it is merely a battle of words.

(1922)

CHAPTER 3

THE CHARACTER OF THE KASHMIRIS

By

Sachchidananda Sinha

The population of Kashmir consists of over 90 per cent of Muslims, and less than 10 per cent of Hindus—the latter almost entirely Brahmins. The Kashmiri Brahmins—though numerically a very small minority—possess a much higher standard in literacy than any other in the State. This fact gives it an importance out of all proportion to its comparatively small number, but though they still predominate in the civil administration of the State—just as the Dogra Rajputs of Jammu do in the military services—their number is slowly decreasing in the civil services, due to the new State policy of encouraging fairly qualified Muslims. By reason, however, of their high intellectuality, keen intelligence, and general aptitude for administrative and professional work, they still occupy a very prominent position in the State policy. Amongst those whose families had settled down for generations in British India, several had attained great distinction in the legal profession, and in public life. The first Indian, who was privileged to occupy a seat on the Bench of the highest British-Indian judicial tribunal, was Mr. Justice Shambhu Nath Pandit, in the Calcutta High Court; while amongst great political leaders—though belonging to different schools of thought and different spheres of public activities—the names of Pandit Motilal Nehru, his son Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, and of the Rt. Hon'ble Sir Tej Bahadur

Sapru, are well known not only throughout India, but also in foreign lands. The Kashmiri Brahmins in British India have also played a prominent part in the development of Indo-Persian and Urdu literatures—Daya Shankar “Naseem” and Braj Narayan Chakbast being well-known Urdu poets, while Ratan Nath “Sarshar”, being, so to say, the originator of the Urdu novel. During the earlier period, when Persian was in vogue, Chandra Bhan “Brahman” was an eminent poet in that language.

Of the vast bulk of the people—who are now Muslims—Capt. R.G. Wreford, the author of the Report of the latest Census, of 1941, writes as follows:—“There is no occasion to say much about the Kashmiri Muslims, in spite of their numerical importance. They have lived in Kashmir since ancient times, and previous to their conversion to Islam (from the early fourteenth century onwards) were a part of the resident Hindu population of Kashmir”. Of their character, Sir John Strachey, in his famous work, called *India: Its Administration and Progress*, recorded his views in these terms: “I have spoken of the great difference between the various countries and peoples of these mountains, (the Himalayas). A remarkable illustration is seen in the contrast between the states on the eastern and western extremities of the Indian Himalaya. There are no braver soldiers than the little Gurkhas of Nepal, and few greater cowards than the stalwart Muhammadans of Kashmir.” Though this was written in the eighties of the nineteenth century, the fact that Kashmiris are not yet recruited for the Army confirms the impression that in the opinion of the State authorities, they still continue to be a non-martial race. That theory, however, having now been discarded in the rest of India, it is to be hoped that the ban against the recruitment of the Kashmiris may soon be removed.

For the rest, the following extracts from the “Kashmir Volume” of *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* give a correct description of the Kashmiris, and their religious notions and

practices:— "Islam came in on a strong wave, and history records that the Kashmiris became Musalmans. But close observers of the country see that the so-called Musalmans are still Hindu at heart. Their shrines are on the exact spots where the old Hindu sthans stood. The Kashmiris do not flock to Mecca, and religious men from Arabia have spoken in strong terms of the apathy of these tepid Musalmans. Through all the vicissitudes of government, and changes in religion, the Kashmiris have remained un-altered. Mughal, Afghan, Sikh, and Dogra, have left no impression on their national character; and at heart the people of the valley are Hindus, as they were before the time of Sikandar Shah. The isolation (of Kashmir) from the outer world accounts for this stable un-changing nationality, and passages in the Rajatarangini show that the main features of the national character were the same in the early period of Hindu rule as they are now." While this is, on the whole, a fair and accurate statement of the Kashmiri Muslims' character, religion and mentality, recent events and developments show that, like all things in this universe, they also are slowly but imperceptibly changing under the stress of modern influences. Perhaps no foreigner had greater opportunities of studying the character of the people of Kashmir than the late Sir Walter Lawrence, who was for years the Settlement Commissioner of the State, and in that exceptionally advantageous capacity amassed highly useful information, which he utilised later in his famous and authoritative work, called *The Valley of Kashmir*. In this book he deals at great length with the character of Kashmiris. It is not possible to reproduce the whole of his dissertation on the subject, but I reprint below some extracts from it, which may profitably be studied by the visitor to Kashmir.

Writes Sir Walter:- "It is not reasonable to look for virtues among an oppressed people, nor it is fair to descant on their vices. When one has been for some years living in the villages, and seeing the Kashmiris as they are, one cannot help feeling pity for their lot, and being a little blind to their faults. I would

add, however, that many of the opinions regarding the Kashmiris are based on observations of the Srinagar people, and the boatmen, and that the principle *ex uno disce omnes* is often at the bottom of the wholesale condemnation of the people of the valley." The writer then proceeds as follows:- "The Kashmiri can turn his hand to anything. He is an excellent cultivator. He is a good gardener, and has a considerable knowledge of horticulture. He can weave excellent woollen cloth, and can make first-rate baskets. He can build himself a house, can make his own sandals, and makes his own ropes. There is scarcely a thing which he cannot do, and he understands profit and loss, and does not often make a bad bargain. In his home life the Kashmiri cultivator is at his best. He is kind to his wife and children, and one rarely hears of divorce scandals, or immorality among the villagers. A woman who has behaved badly is a marked character in the country, and public opinion is always against her. The husband sometimes chastises his wife, and the men talk somewhat boastfully of the necessity for maintaining discipline in their houses. But as a matter of fact the wife, both in Musalman and Hindu houses, is all-powerful, and I believe that, as a rule, the Kashmiri lives in awe of his consort. The Kashmiri wife is a real helpmate, and joint interests give rise to a camaraderie between man and wife, which is very healthy." He concludes:- "It is difficult to describe a people's character. I would, however, add that the Kashmiris possess an individuality and national character which will cling to them wherever they go. I have seen men who have returned to Kashmir, whose ancestors left the country two or three generations ago. Their dress was changed, and their manners had changed, yet they retained unmistakable signs of a Kashmir origin, and their ways of thought and of speech showed their descent. The Kashmiris are fond of their own country, its food, its water, and its dress, and, though oppression has driven them out of the valley, many have come back and all are loth to leave. The Kashmiri proverb, (which means that 'a bird is content when it is on its own branch') is often quoted by a

Kashmiri when the advantages of service in the Punjab are pointed out to him. Finally, though the character of Kashmiris leaves much to be desired, I think that it is to their credit that it is not worse, considering the few chances they have had for becoming truthful, manly, and self-respecting. The word *izzat* of often on their lips, and they deplore the fact that they have no honour in the eyes of their rulers, or of their fellows. A man who can be beaten and robbed by one with a vestige of authority soon ceases to respect himself and his fellowmen, and it is useless to look for the virtues of a free people among the Kashmiris, and unfair to twit them with the absence of such virtues. The Kashmiri is what his rulers have made him, but I believe and hope that two generations of a just and strong rule will transform him into a useful, intelligent and fairly honest man."

It is half a century since Sir Walter Lawrence depicted the character of the Kashmiris in his book mentioned above, which was published in 1895, and from which I have made some extracts. Two years later, I paid my first visit to the Valley, and traversed it from end to end. Since then I have paid frequent visits to Kashmir, the last being in 1941. As the result of my many visits—not only to Srinagar, but also to the villages in the main valley and its side-valleys—I endorse the hopeful view expressed by Sir Walter Lawrence that the years that have passed, since he wrote, have wrought an appreciable improvement in the character of the Kashmiris. Though it is perfectly true that nothing changes so slowly as a people's character, nevertheless it can safely be asserted that the result of "two generations of a just and strong rule" has already transformed the Kashmiri "into a useful, intelligent, and fairly honest man." The amelioration in the condition of the peasantry, which resulted from the acceptance by Government of the recommendations of the Settlement Commissioner in matters agrarian, had led to an improvement in the character of the people, who had thereby become appreciably self-reliant. The recent measures taken by the State for the protection of the peasant

against the usurer, the fixing of maximum rates of interest, and the prevention of the transfer of agricultural land to non-agriculturists, have all tended in the same direction, and already there is a distinct improvement in his character.

(1944)

CHAPTER 4

THE GOWNED KASHMIRI

By
James Milne

Listen to the Salutation of the Dawn:

Look to this day,

For it is life, the very life of life,

In its brief course lie all the

Varieties and realities of existence:

The bliss of growth

The glory of action,

The splendour of beauty;

For Yesterday is but a dream

And To-morrow is only a vision,

But To-day well-lived makes

Every Yesterday a dream of happiness,

And every To-morrow a vision of hope.

Look well, therefore, to this day!

Such is the salutation of the Dawn.

From the Sanskrit.

Nowhere could the natural elements which make and mould human life be more inspiring, more kindly, more helpful in a hundred ways, than in the Happy Valley of Kashmir. What sort of men have they thrown up, and do they hear the Salutation of the Dawn as a Sermon on their Himalayan Mount?

Perhaps, not, because they have not yet come to any fuller philosophy of existence than is contained in their religions, Moslem or Hindu, and in their deadening daily toil. They are primitive, untutored as we should say, just a raw, simple people of the soil. But Kashmiri men have been a long, long time, and they have their inheritance of customs, characteristics, and personality.

Akbar, the story goes, thought so little of them, in his martial Mogul day, that he disrobed them of all Oriental caparisoning and ordered them to wear woollen cloaks, hanging to their ankles. "Men!" said he; "faint-hearts, not lion-hearts, therefore skirts for you." His order is their dress to-day, habit, once it is enforced or adopted, being part of us all. But nightgownlike cloaks notwithstanding, they are often fine fellows to the eye, though not a match in handsomeness for their women, whose dark eyes and red lips outshine the Jhelum. If Kashmir has no martial history except invasions, how could Akbar expect its people to be natural-born warriors? They threw up no great leaders of their own to mould a stern national character, and so we have a country and a race never valorous, but ever colourful. It is a still picture of delicate, finely-woven threads, not one of high drama, like the prancing story of the Sikhs or the Rajputs.

Peace, we know, has its victories as well as war, and one of them in Asia, for what it is worth, is the Kashmiri man, deep black of hair, dark brown of skin, languishing of eye, whitetoothed and smiling, most likely shapely of body and limb, a native you like on sight, partly because, as you perceive, he is willing to like you. He is gay, elastic both of body and mind, there differing from the Indian below the Himalayas, who never sits on a fence and looks at the sun and laughs with sheer physical joy.

The Kashmiri may be the humblest creature, in station and possessions, a desert in flesh, for want of nourishing food,

shivering in the cold weather, because he is ill-clad. Even when he squats on his brazier of charcoal, with the folds of his gown gathered about it and his legs, he is still cold. But he has a relish of life, begotten atmospherically of the Happy Valley, which nurtures him spiritually, though he may not show great signs of it, and gives him his contented, hopeful temperament and accepting outlook.

Perhaps the Kashmiri's comparative singleness of race has made it easier for him to keep his type. Passing the centuries in this recess of India, he is less composite, less mongrel, than most of her peoples. He has been free from the stimulation of violence, because he has let more vigorous races come in succession and go in succession, and the corroding lust of ill-gotten gain has not been his. His schooling has been to take what came, a sort of Kismet—not the teaching of a blow for a blow, and let yours be got in first. There has resulted an expression of olive-oil softness, home-grown in the sunniest spots, a Kashmiri good-nature, a character-suited for the crafts of life more than for its strenuous occasions.

There is hardly anything, you discover, that a Kashmiri craftsman will not do well, once he gets down to it. Take the making of papier-mache, which is a famed speciality of Srinagar, or silver-working, still an older trade on the banks of the Jhelum. Wood carving, too, which finds ingenious and artistic forms, mostly in walnut, still a precious wood in the northern forests of India, though our "bright young people" might call furniture made of it "Victorian."

Clever boat-building is natural in a land of many waters, and in a land of flowers gardening is almost ordained in the coolie who comes to the Sahib's garden. The skins of wild animals trapped in the Himalayas give the Kashmiri another trade in which he is expert, for he cures them well. The furriers of London or Paris or New York are left to do the rest, though a visiting Memsahib to Srinagar will easily find what she needs

all ready for the tempestuous Himalayas, or even for the elegance of a dinner-party in the cold weather of India. And she can have a lovely time bargaining with the fur-merchants of Srinagar, who are full of Eastern courtesy and persuasion, never in a hurry, and manageable, if deftly handled.

The Kashmiri man, merchant, boatman, or ryot, looks his feelings more than speaks them, in this resembling his women, though always less eloquently. You fancy that you detect a streak of sentiment in him, if only because that is a quality native to mountain peoples everywhere. But, in his case, it has more relationship to gentleness than to chivalry, and it may be illustrated, as it was to me, by supposing that a Kashmiri servant is dismissed by his Sahib master, after many warnings.

"Serve him right," all the other native servants will say, and they may make a chorus of forty or fifty voices; "he is no good, and we have seen it." By and by they will come to the Sahib, saying, "He can find nothing to do and starves—he and his wife and children. Please will you not take him back, Sahib, and we will see he isn't lazy and useless any more?" The heart of the Kashmiri may be soft, but one could scarcely, so far as he is concerned draw the lesson that it "makes us right or wrong," as Robert Burns sang. Certainly it is impossible for a Western onlooker in the East to say more than, "Things seem so, but this is the Orient, an old world new to us." He will realise that it has as many folds as a thousand Kashmir shawls, and then continue his pilgrim's way.

"Do not admit a Kashmiri to your friendship," an Indian wisdom-while-you-wait has it, "or you will hang a hatchet over your door." Even crueller is the saying, "Many fowls in a house will defile it, and many Kashmiris in a country will spoil it." As one-time traveller among them dwelt on the curious contrast between the often Herculean build of a peasant and his "whining complaints and timid disposition" Catch that giant telling lies, as might, perhaps, be done, for a lie is a compromise, a

subtlety, an evasion most likely in an unheroic national character, and his excuses were "so ready, so profuse, and so comical" that our traveller merely smiles. There, and in such views, we have the civilian version of Akbar's, "You Kashmiris have only stomachs to eat, not to fight," and he ordered them to eat their victuals cold.

Well, the case of the Kashmiris ryot is sukkut, meaning hard and difficult, and his puttoo, or homespun, covers many cares. So the gentleness of the valley, after ingeminating itself into its men, as, with more welcome effects, into its women, becomes, possibly, a subtlety, a craftiness capable of being also "slimness." You cannot have, in a race, a personality which is both strong and flabby, but must be content with what is good in it, and make the best of what is less good.

Wherever you turn in Kashmir this breath of softness meets you in various forms; a universality of satin-texture in the Himalayan setting of stark grandeur. Indeed, is it not world-wide news that its water softens a shawl better than any other water whatsoever? and you should see the Kashmiri women washing their shawls in the silvery Dal Lake. They are primitively innocent of small sins, for they will not know, being no smokers, that tobacco grown in Kashmir has not the pungency of that grown elsewhere. Generally, you have only to feel the peculiar softness of the atmosphere to grasp all this and many others things, which cannot be communicated in words, for they are only sensations.

The Kashmiri man, in appearance only if often likened to the militant Afghan and the stalwart Afridi; The three races have large, aquiline features, and skins which have well been described as "subdued Jewish." There the resemblance ends, as came home very clearly to us one fine April morning when there was a parade of sleek, frisky polo-ponies in a Jhelum-side garden. The head groom was an Afridi, fair of hair and almost of skin, big-boned and athletic. One of the ponies kicked about

in such an unsilken, violent way, that the gathered Kashmiri servants scurried away, timid and alarmed, though two score in number. The Afridi man, who rode the beast, never shook in his saddle, and by great horse-manship soon had it quiet and obedient, and then the Kashmiris returned, vastly relieved. They were bred in a valley of concord, where life, meagre as it might be, has always been easy; while he came from marches where the climate is more severe, where it is a struggle to live, and where, consequently, stronger men grow.

But in the higher, outer parts of Sir Hari Singh's "delectable duchy" there are men who, having a constant struggle with Nature, are stern, as well as strong. They are typified by the Gujars, who lived wildly by plunder in Mogul times, and now are tamed to be herdsmen. Their queer houses, made of beaten earth, have flat roofs, and you can hardly see them against a hillside. But their clothes attract, dull reds and smoky blues being true colours for paths leading through the greenery of grass and trees, starred by flowing waters.

You are instructed that the Kashmiris rarely fight among themselves, being unquarrelsome by virtue of their ease of character. That, and their poverty, make for the larger peace of the community, and word battles are, generally, the worst disturbances you will meet among the boat-folk of the pillowy Jhelum, or among the jostling populace in the narrow, wandering streets of Srinagar. Would a new and strogner manhood have developed among the Kashmiris if we had kept their country in our own hands, and the British Tommy, garrisoning India, in it through out the Indian summer? Students of human nature might have been interested to watch the consequences of such a contact between energy and "Kismet." But the Kashmiri himself would, most likely, just have smiled his subtle, dreamy, lotus-like smile and remained indifferent, because sufficient unto himself is the day and to-morrow may never come, who knows?

(1943)

CHAPTER 5

THE KASHMIRIS

By
S.N. Dhar

The golden valley of Kashmir is one of the loveliest spots of the world. Most of her people claim descent from the primitive Indo- Aryan stock but Kashmir is actually inhabited by diverse and different races separated one from the other by high mountain passes. The scope of this chapter will not permit a discussion of the different races; only the characteristics of the people of the valley proper will be treated at length

CHARACTER

The Kashmiri may have many faults and foibles. He has his virtues and excellences all the same. He is non-aggressvie. Quarrelsome is foreign to his mild and temperate nature. Even his dog only barks and does not bite. Perhaps centuries of earlier tyrannical misrule are responsible for this ease of character. He is lazy to the point of indolence. He shirks opportunities to stir out of his land. His "Good Earth" is too strong for him. His stick-in-the-grove traditionalism has left him almost stranded in the march of civilisation. In his individualism he evinces Jewish traits. This characteristic is especially pronounced in Kashmiri Pandits whose individulaism is tinged with conceit and egoism.

The Kashmiri Pandit is parsimonious to a fault. His life and habits are simple and frugal. He is loath to go away from his

home. His adaptability to his social and political environment is admirable. But he is lethargic. On the other hand, the Kashmiri Muslim is active, energetic and dynamic. It is he who is the unrivalled craftsman in wood, metal, paper machie etc. It is he who cultivates the soil, rears the sheep and works in the cottage industries of Kashmir, thus forming the proletariat of Kashmir. It is good that his standard of life is perceptibly increasing. Her is not now so intellectually inferior to the sister community as he used to be.

KASHMIRI WOMEN

Kashmiri women are among the best feminine types of India and compare favourably with the Pathans in appearance and complexion. They are mostly somewhat fair-complexioned and of slightly Jewish features. Kashmiri Panditains, who lead indoor lives are fairer than their Muslim sisters but their health level is very much lower. Much of the beauty and grace of Kashmiri Muslim women is prematurely spoiled by the hard work in field and farm or deplorably early child bearing.

Interesting wordy, harmless and noisy battles of Kashmiri boatwomen are well-known Kashmiri women wear pherans, which are long sleeved gowns, hanging in awkward folds. These pherans are as Mrs. Freda Bedi, remarked last year, in the presence of the writer "just devices invented by the exploiting and jealous male to disguise the beauty of the Kashmiri women". They serve that unaesthetic purpose eminently well! Kashmiri women are not clean in their personal habits. They know and observe ever so little of sanitation. Perhaps the climate is partly responsible for that. Still Kashmiri women are learning to be hygienic and progressive.

SUPERSTITIONS IN KASHMIR

Lack of scientific knowledge fosters and preserves superstitions. Civilisation has not quite dispelled superstition in the

West. Few Englishmen, for instance, walk under a ladder which is leaning against a wall.

The Kashmiris are very superstitious. A glimpse of some of them is interesting. If some one sneezes in a room or a house, while some one else is going out or is about to start some work, he pauses for some time, to 'liquidate' the effect of the bad omen. The Kashmiri has a superstitious belief in the many wandering faqirs. He supposes that a mere word from one of them can even cure chronic disease and that their 'favour' is productive of success and prosperity. No wonder then that many unscrupulous, itinerant and other faqirs put on sage airs and freely exploit even educated Kashmiris, not to speak of the very credulous illiterate ones.

The Kashmiri Pandit is, strangely enough, much more superstitious than the Kashmiri Muslim. When he leaves his home he is anxious to see whom he leaves first on the right side; the first passer-by on the right side should not be a woman, a priest or a cow, as they are ominous. If it is a sweeper with his full set of broom, basket etc., It is so very good! Over-enthusiastic though irrational belief in the pseudo-science of astrology is but natural with the Kashmiri Pandit. No wonder that many reputed and famed astrologers, dogged by hosts of seekers of luck, employment, wealth, promotion, family happiness and so on, earn fat incomes. The Kashmiri Pandit makes extensive consultations with his astrologer before undertaking a journey, to decide upon the auspicious day and calculates the time of start to the exact minute. One of the bases for the marriage of a boy and girl, is the general agreement of their horoscopic tendencies, which decision is, of course, arrived at by the astrologer so that these farces of marriages are not only the ill-famed anachronisms of 'parent marriages', but they actually are also, what we may call, 'astrologer marriages'.

The Kashmiri Muslim is strangely enough, less superstitious than his Hindu compatriot. Perhaps the reason is that

he is more impulsive, less thoughtful and busier in his work than his Hindu compatriot. He does not mind sneezes. But he has a traditional, superstitious fear of graveyards and even some old cremation grounds. He, if he lives in a village, has surely a belief in the will-o'-the wisp, whom he calls Rah-Chowk. Many Muslim villagers are supposed to have actually had encounters with Rah-Chowk—the 'devil' whose two eyes glow in the dark night and who carries a pot of fire, with its tongues of flame leaping up in the air, on his head and who leads the nocturnal pedestrian astray to a stream or towards a marshy swamp where he drowns the unfortunate wretch. No one, not even the educated people or the social services try to remove this cramping, soul-debasing fear, through boiling down the so-called devil down to the phenomenon of phosphorescence.

In the villages many ailing children are duly produced before the holy presence of some village 'saint. Pir or Pandit, who solemnly mutters lots of holy verses over the child and then writes some hieroglyphic letters over a piece of paper. The paper is folded and sewn in black cloth and then the charm is tied round the neck of the child. These amulets are usually worn round good-looking and healthy children, women and cattle so as to ward off the evil eye. No doubt "amulet sellers" are carrying on a busy rural trade. No reformer dares to speak against them lest the feared cry of 'religion in danger' be raised against him.

One thing is certain. Superstitions in Kashmir, as elsewhere in India, are dying out, slowly and steadily. It is not uncommon to see progressive, sceptic youth scoffing at the pet superstitions of their elders. This tendency is bound to get accelerated with the march of time. Maybe a day will come, when Kashmir will be free from the sway of superstitions.

MYSTICAL AND POETICAL

The Kashmiri lives in a land where beauties of nature are abundant and universal—the gushing mountain springs, the mysterious, awe-inspiring high mountain lakes, clad in solitary and sublime grandeur, the beautiful, glacier valleys, the innumerable meadows and glens dotting the beautiful valley, the swift silvery streams, the Moghul and other famous Gardens, the Dal and other lakes and so many other beauty spots of Kashmir, these one and all, combine to excite the imagination of the Kashmiri so much that he not unoften soars to poetic and mystic heights. Kashmiris have been great mystics. Kashmir has produced great poets and poetesses whom we shall have occasion to deal with later on.

Suffice it to say here, that not only have the poets and mystics of note been influenced by the grandeur, the beauty and the sublimity of the natural surroundings of Kashmir, but even the folklore, the so-called literature of the people, evinces signs of the response of the folk of Kashmir to their environment.

CULTURE

Kashmiris are the heirs of an ancient culture. They have bravely withstood cultural onslaughts by Chaks, Pathans, Moghuls and Sikhs, who successively ruled over Kashmir. At the same time, Kashmiris have always evinced a curious faculty for absorbing foreign elements, a faculty that will indeed help them in dynamic times to come.

The Kashmiri Pandit continues his “more than Spanish objection to manual labour” and has therefore more access to cultural activities than the Kashmiri Muslims, though the educated Muslims are gradually coming to hold their own in this regard.

The artist-craftsman flourishes in Kashmir as nowhere else in the world. His products of embroidery, papier-mache, silver work, wood carving and stone work fetch admiration

everywhere. He is the unparalleled furrier, curio-collector, and taxidermist. Yet is interesting to observe that the art-sense is conspicuous in the Kashmiris as a whole by its absence. Homes of the lower classes and even the upper middle classes are not at all beautifully decorated. In the drawing rooms of the upper classes of Kashmir, which are a curious mixture of a sitting-room and living room, you will hardly see a papier-mache vase or a walnut table. The fact is that the aesthetic sense of the Kashmiri never receives any proper training, whether at home or at school. The Kashmiri houses, on the old style, with their picturesque balconies, latticed windows, carved gateways and ceilings and painted walls have gone out of use and have been replaced by the present-day houses, a blend of old Kashmiri and modern styles, meaningless and even shabby. It appears that the art-sense in the Kashmiri has entered a decadent phase.

HEALTH

Most of the Kashmiris are fair-complexioned. The peasantry and the working classes, forming the vast Muslim majority, are well- built. Their health should have been still better but for their dirty living habits which render their homes full of stench and filth. The town and city people have been manifesting appreciable deterioration in health level which is an ironic and deplorable anomaly considering that Kashmir is a great reservoir of natural foods and that its climate is so healthy. The Kashmiri Pandits are not so good physically as the Muslims are but their features are more Aryan. They generally take to tame clerical and other 'intellectual' occupations, which also conduce to their lack of good health.

The staple food of Kashmir is rice. Rice is mill-husked in both cities and villages and also, being over-cooked, it affords but little nutrition. Milk, fruit, and eggs, so abundant in the valley are not very much used by the Kashmiris. Yet another sad commentary on the mentality of the people. Consequently T.B. has been plaguing the city of Srinagar, towns and even the vil-

lages. Cholera epidemics used to take heavy toll of the lives of the Kashmiris but now they occur less frequently. On the whole, thanks to the consistent efforts of the State Medical Department, Kashmiris are increasingly becoming health-mined, though slowly so.

GENIUS FOR FILTHINESS

Aldous Huxley, the great writer, has said in his characteristic, piquant and provoking way, in *Jesting Pilate*; "Kashmiri has a genius for filthiness". To a fanatic lover of Kashmir this remark would sound disparaging, haughty and even cynical. But every thoughtful Kashmiri, or one who knows Kashmir and Kashmiris very well, readily recognises a lot of truth in this otherwise disconcerting critical remark. One who has humorously enough, observed hilly Kashmiris basking in the sun in groups with their clothes off, picking lice from them, will bear ready testimony to the caustic remark of Aldous Huxley. I have seen these poor, ignorant Kashmiris, who migrate to the plains during winter in search of labour, actually doing so on street pavements in Lahore and Amritsar, quite unconscious of and deaf to the ridicule and criticism of passers-by. Then I thought that Aldous Huxley spoke no more than the truth—the shameful truth.

Why is it so? Why has the Kashmiri the 'genius for filthiness' and not the genius for cleanliness? So many factors have contributed to this traditional, unhygienic way of life. The Kashmir winter, bitter and severe as it is, is the main cause of filthiness and dirty habits of the Kashmiri. The masses in Kashmir cannot afford the amenities of home that can preserve habits of cleanliness during the severe winter. But the deplorable fact is that dirty habits, engendered in winter, are continued during summer, when every Kashmiri could easily keep clean and smart. Why it is again so is easily understood when we consider that the masses in Kashmir are yet steeped in ignorance and illiteracy. Of course Rural uplift Movement,

sponsored by the Government has done much to improve the sanitary conditions of many villages, but on the whole, the Kashmiri has not yet given up his filthiness.

Accosting a bright-looking village boy one day last year, in a town, Shopian where I had gone on a trip with a party of college students, I looked at the rather dirty boy from top to toe and gently lifting his chin towards me, I said to him, "Do you take a bath daily?"

"Why, no!" was his surprised, brief reply, clothed in an uncouth tone.

"Don't you feel you should keep your body clean"? Padam Nath, one of the college students, said to him.

"Why?" he gaped at us. And, then after a thoughtful pause, he continued, "I bathe in summer when it gets very hot. I bathe in this stream"—pointing to a nearby stream—"this stream is very fierce then. Now, in autumn, it is pretty cold. Of course, we never bathe in winter."

"What do your parents tell you? I am sure they want you to take baths regularly through-out the year"?

"Our parents are so stubborn. They do not want us to bathe even in summer, when we very much like to bathe. They put ink impressions upon our thighs in summer. That is done in the morning to ensure that we do not bathe during the day. Every night the mark is examined. If it is effaced in the least, we are belaboured mercilessly. I have, of course"—his eyes lit up as he started speaking about himself—"picked up a trick from a city student as to how to deceive my parents' vigilance."

So that is that. Rural Kashmir, young and old, continue the traditional habits of apathy to clean and sanitary life, the advantages of which are rarely known by the village folk. That

reminds me of the remark of senior Rev. Biscoe, who used to say in his inimitable, humorous way, that Srinagar, the great Capital of the State—not to speak of the villages of Kashmir—used to be so filthy and full of stench, that he could smell its peculiar smell two miles away!

(1945)

CHAPTER 6

CHARACTER OF THE KASHMIRIS

By
G.L. Kaul

Kashmiris have easy and pleasant lives. In time of danger they show much courage and endurance. Physically they are among the finest people on earth. Their physique, their character and their language are so marked as to produce a nationality of its own. Intellectual superiority, keenness of preception, clearness of mind and ingenuity dominate their character. Alert intelligence, quick wit and artistic feeling show in them signs of a bright future. They are essentially of mild and cheerful disposition. Their versatile genius wins laurels for them everywhere. They are extremely hospitable and carry the arts of civil life to high perfection. Sir Francis Younghusband remarks "In spite of the splendid Moghuls, brute Pathans, bullying Sikhs and rude Dogras the Kashmiris ever remained the same." The conquerors came in hordes but they scarcely touched the soul of the people. Says Bernier, "Kashmiris are celebrated for wit and considered much more intelligent and ingenious than the Indians. In Poetry and science they are no inferior to the Persians. They are also very active and industrious." It is possible for a people to deteriorate under foreign yoke and that is why a Kashmiri did not mind to speak a lie sometimes. Men and women generally dress alike. The Pheran, a long loose gown, is the principal item of their dress. This helps to breed cowardice in them. Without it they look like a fine race. Untouchability between the two sister communities is quite unknown. However you may annoy him, the Kashmiri

will never attempt to offend you. To provoke his neighbour is not in his scheme. Recent events have shown that the Kashmiris are not timid. The isolation from the outer world accounted for the stable unchanging nationality of the Kashmiris till Pratap Singh's reign." Cunningham says that "Kashmiris are the most immortal race of India."

Says Dr. Neve: "On the whole the Kashmiris are grateful to benefits. Their moral sense is fairly developed. They readily distinguish between right and wrong". As recorded in the Rucāt-i-Alamgiri-Aurangzeb is believed to have said at Agra: "The Kashmiris are not to be found here that we might appoint them in Public offices." Writes Dr. Neve of the Pandits elsewhere. "Their intellectual superiority over the rest of the population must be admitted. They are quick of apprehensions and have good memories. One of their besetting faults is conceit. But some of them are very superior, trustworthy, honest, clear headed and industrious." A French gentleman, M. Hick, has written that the Kashmiris are a race of most superior order in every respect. "The Kashmiris resemble the Konkanasthas and their countries also resemble as they both produce rice which accounts for their intelligence. But in two respects the two people differ. The Kashmiris are eaters of flesh from ancient times and have not given up flesh eating even now. The Konkanasthas appear to have been vegetarians from ancient days. The former again usually wear the beard but the latter do not (beard looks rare now). Beards in Kashmir are ancient and pre-Mohammedan as we have already seen from Kalhana's description of Brahmins collected for the election of a King."

The following passages from "The India We Served" by Sir W.R. Lawrence who worked in Kashmir for some time will be read with great interest. "The Kashmiris are called Hawabin. Nowhere in the East have I met anybody of men so clever and so courteous as the Kashmiri Pandits....The people were Kashmiris as they are, in spite of centuries' of repression and wanton cruelty. Physically they were splendid, in spite of the

effeminate dress which foreign tyrants had imposed on them. As cultivators, as artisans and as artists they are unrivalled in the East and for brains the Kashmiri Pandit is hard to beat, as all India knows well. They are to be found in many provinces of British India and in the Indian States in the higher ranks of officialdom. And I say after careful examination that the Kashmiris are perhaps as great a people as any in the East.... But they will beat all three—Rajputs, Pathans and Punjabis as cultivators, as artisans or as wits. I saw also the growth of self-respect and of manliness and am confident that under a just Government they will win a good name. They not only know the facts but had the most surprising genius for appraising the real value of other men's lands. They supported their valuation by most logical and convincing arguments and during my 21 years in India I have never met the equal of these Kashmiri sages".

"The type of the old Pandits—these literati, were, to be sure, excellent people and admirably versed in their Sanskrit texts but they were devoid of historical sense and their intellectual horizon was bounded by the narrow limits of their native valley....., but the race possessed exceptional intellectual qualities". —Prof. A. Foucher.

Professor Jadu Nath Sarkar in his book "History of Aurangzeb, Vol. V, 1924 edition, page 415," writes:—"So backward were the people in civilisation that even the upper classes of Kashmiris were deemed unfit to be employed in the Imperial Service as Mansabdars, till near the end of Aurangzeb's reign." We learn that it was only in 1699 that the Emperor was first induced by the then Subedar to appoint people of Kashmir as Mansabdars in any appreciable number.....No Kashmiri Hindu gained any office under the Moghul Empire. And as for the common Muslims of the province if they were villagers they were despised as ignorant savages, and townsmen as lying flatterers and cowardly cheats. In this universal closing of honourable and responsible careers to talent, the intellectual

cleverness of certain classes of the natives developed into glibness of tongue, low cunning and skill in treacherous intrigue so that in Moghul India Kashmiri came to be a by-word for a smooth spoken rogue as the Gracculus was in the early days of the Roman Empire." Prof. Sarkar says that this account is based on *Tarikh-i-Azmi*. How this observation is misleading may be studied from the following quotation:—Aurangzeb once paid a compliment to the intelligence of the Kashmiris specially that of the Pandits at Agra as is recorded in the *Ruqat-i-Alamgiri*:—"Kashmiri darin mulk nestand ki ma muqqarar kunem" (The Kashmiris are not to be found here that we might appoint them in public offices).

Sir Walter again writes:— "A man who can be beaten and robbed by any one with a vestige of authority soon ceases to respect himself and his fellowmen, and it is useless to look for the virtues of a free people among the Kashmiris, and unfair to twist them with the absence of such virtues. The Kashmiri is what his rulers have made him, but I believe and hope that two generations of a just and strong rule will transform him into a useful, intelligent and fair honest man".

Roughly speaking from 13th to 19th Century the Kashmiri Pandit was reduced to the position of a surf. From high intellectual plane he moved to earth and became practically earthly. He tilled land, digged graves, became a tailor, chikanduz, mason, carpenter, petty shopkeeper and what not. His survival was a miracle. His poverty could be seen in his kitchen which boasted of some utensils of clay that could not be replaced even on festival days. With the change in administration he seized some petty jobs. This further aggravated his situation. He came under the vicious influence of Khandani and Kamina. He gave up his profession and became a parasite. Vices overpowered him which prevented him from rising into full manhood even with the spread of modern education. But he was not always what he appears to be now. He is a subject for study.

With the change over in administration in 1947 his position was again reversed. He was driven 125 years backwards. Though obviously acute un-employment did not eat him up as before he became cripple morally, politically and economically. It is doubtful if the old ideal will survive the present rude shock which civilisation has received in this revolution.

The Muslim, on the other hand, did all sorts of jobs and that is why he is growing into full manhood in the changed circumstances.

CHAPTER 7

THE PEOPLE

By
Ernest F. Neve

The two indispensable officials of the Kashmir village are the lumbardar and the chowkidar. The latter is practically the village policeman, and his duties are light, as although the Kashmiri is by nature deceitful and given to petty larceny, in the villages there is a public opinion which compels the fulfilment of pecuniary engagements or contracts and puts down fraud and dishonesty. This system works fairly satisfactorily, so far as the village is concerned, but there are, of course, frequent defaulters. In relation to Government, the Kashmiri conscience is very lax, and deceit and robbery are condoned by the villagers even if they do not aid and abet. Europeans are treated as if they were officials, so they have to be careful or they will be cheated. Indeed, they have suffered much in connection with the grain trade. Large advances made to villagers in connection with contracts for grain delivery have been absolutely repudiated and the money misappropriated. And hitherto, in matters of this kind, European capitalists have received no encouragement from the Kashmiri Government, and have sometimes been unable to obtain justice.

The Kashmiri lumbardar, or village headman, is usually an elderly man, often tall, with a beard dyed red with henna, with his upper lip closely cropped and a large rather dirty white turban on his shaven head. He has a long tunic or pheran of put-too (Kashmiri woollen cloth), wide, baggy cotton trousers, cut

off just below the knee, bare legs and feet, with putties and stout, pointed shoes.

The ordinary villager looks very dirty. On his head he wears a greasy old grey, orange or red skull-cap. His cotton pheran, rather like a night-gown, but with wide sleeves, originally white, is now grey. Loose, short cotton trousers and plaited sandals of rice straw complete his costume. But on his back he has a long, grey woollen Kashmiri blanket, with the end thrown over his left shoulder. Those who have Government employment or service with Europeans often wear puttoo coats, putties and leather sandals.

Many Kashmiris wear charms. The little children have them sewn on to the tops of their caps, a smooth polished pebble, two or three leopard's claws or a metal ornament. The men and women have little oblong packets, about two inches by one, of cloth or leather, tied to their caps or round the neck or one of the arms. These amulets usually contain a piece of paper inscribed with cabalistic signs or with a few words from the Koran. The people are good-tempered, often merry; they have a distinct sense of humour and enjoy a joke. Sir Walter Lawrence gives a typical instance of their grim humour. "One day while hearing a petition I noticed an elderly Hindu villager standing on his head. He remained in that position for nearly half an hour, when I asked him his business. He then explained that his affairs were in so confused a state that he did not know whether he was standing on his head or his heels." If making a petition, a common demonstration to indicate their sad condition is "a procession of two men and one woman. One man wears a shirt of matting. One carries a pan of embers on his head, and the woman bears a number of broken earthen pots." They are, however, patient, industrious in their field occupations and capable of great endurance.

The Kashmiri coolie is a wonderful being. In these days of revived athletic cult a meed of praise should not be withheld

from men who can carry a weight of 100lb. for five or more miles, and who often carry a load of 60lb. for a whole march of six kos (12 miles).

They begin early. Little children may often be seen coming down from the forest, each carrying a load of wood proportioned to his size. A little five-year-old child is carrying a bundle of sticks weighing at least 30 lb. Behind him are two or three boys, perhaps eight or ten years old, each with faggots of wood from 40 to 60 lb. in weight.

In their daily life the villagers, who are mostly cultivators, are in the habit of carrying heavy loads of grass and other field produce.

In appearance the coolie is often sallow, about 5 feet 6 in height, with a short beard and shaven head, covered with a dirty skull-cap. His physique is not at first sight impressive. He is spare. There is no great obvious development of muscle, certainly nothing of the "Sandow" type. But the muscle is there, hard and compact and able to perform these astonishing feats of load-carrying.

The coolie is in many ways deft with his hands. He can twist saplings into tough withes for lashing together loose bundles. He can plait most serviceable grass sandals and prove himself an agricultural "handy man" in many directions. Nevertheless, he is timid, afraid of bogeys and of being left alone in the dark. Most coolies are cowardly and inclined to be untruthful and deceitful, but not all. I have known brave men who have risked their lives for others, with no applauding gallery and no laudatory press to approve. Kashmiri coolies sometimes deserve decorations—but instead they too often get blows and curses, not often from their English employers, but very frequently from the native servants or chaprasies of Europeans.

The coolie is often of cheerful disposition. If during the day he grumbles at the weight of his load, the length of the road or the steepness of the hills and the probability that the camping place may be cold and without shelter or firewood, he soon forgets his woes when the tents are pitched, fires lighted and his rice is cooking in a large earthenware pot, from which issues a savoury smell. And when he has eaten his fill he often breaks out into song as he sits by the camp-fire, and becomes conversational and even confidential.

Ah, those camp-fires! What pleasant associations they conjure up, as after the toil of the day one sits and watches the mighty sheets of flame tongued and forked, twisting, bending, leaping, flashing or even fiercely roaring and compelling one to shift one's seat. In the background the tall, dark shadowy outline of the firs or the grey rocks catching up and reflecting back the ruddy glow, while showers of sparks like golden rain are given off and floating upwards are lost in the darkness above. The aromatic scent of the burning firewood is carried on the crisp, cold, pure mountain air. A little further off is another similar fire, casting its red light on the faces of the cook and some of his coolie helpers. No sound is heard but the crackling of wood and the occasional louder explosion of a noisy fragment, the call of a fox or jackal close by or the croak of the night-jar.

How often have we sat by similar camp-fires in years gone by with many different companions, some of whom have passed away.

In spite of his great physical strength and powers of endurance, the Kashmiri is highly strung and neurotic, and he will often weep on slight provocation. In the presence of very little danger he will sob like a child. These people can bear pain much better than Europeans, but owing to want of self-control they make more fuss. Naturally impulsive and huffy, they respond readily to tactful handling. On the whole they are

grateful for benefits. Their moral sense is fairly well developed. They readily distinguish between right and wrong. In money affairs they are close, and the more wealthy are mean. They spend little, and except at weddings care nothing for show. Even the rich wear dirty clothes lest they should be thought too well off. They are affectionate in family life, and very good in nursing sick relatives.

The staple food in the valley is rice. Round the hills it is maize and wheat, and higher up buckwheat and barley. Vegetables and lentils, peas, etc., are largely consumed. Meat is a luxury for occasional consumption. A man doing full work will eat as much as 3 lb. of rice in a day.

Kashmiri children are often bright, pleasant and pretty, but spoilt. Owing to the conditions of life, they acquire, in certain directions, a remarkable gift of bearing responsibility and even of taking initiative action. A small child, five years old, will be seen driving an enormous buffalo along and thumping it with a big stick at intervals. Children will cleverly round up sheep and goats, for there are no properly-trained sheep dogs. Early in the morning they take the herds and flocks up to the hills and drive them back at night. And often we may see a very small child lying on the grass by the side of a babbling stream, in entire charge of the flocks and herds which are peacefully grazing around. The girls are the great water-carriers. Owing to hard work they soon lose their good looks. They are married at an early age, soon after ten. Little girls wear small skull-caps, and may have their hair beautifully done in a large number of plaits spread out over the back and gracefully braided together. After marriage, however, a thicker turban-like red cap, studded with pins, is worn, and over it a square of country cloth to act as a veil and cover the whole back. The rest of the usual dress of the village women is an ample pheran of dark blue cotton print, with a red pattern stamped on it; or the gown may be of grey striped cotton or wool, with wide sleeves turned back and showing a dirty lining. Round the neck a collar of silver or

brass, enamelled in red or blue, or a coral and silver bead necklace, is usually worn; and large metal ear-rings are common. Glass bangles or massive silver bracelets and finger rings, with a gate or cornelian, complete the list of ordinary jewellery worn by Kashmiri women. The feet are bare, or leather shoes, often green, are worn. The houses are without chimneys, so the inmates become smoke-begrimed. There are fewer Mohammedan women than men. The ratio is about nine to ten. Perhaps for this reason polygamy is comparatively uncommon.

More females are born than males, but baby girls do not receive so much care as the boys, and the mortality from smallpox and infantine diseases is higher. The girls are often mothers at the age of fourteen.

Kashmiri women vary very much. A very large number of the peasant women are dirty, degraded and debased. But there are not a few who are very different and who are capable and manage their houses and children and even their husbands.

Kashmiris are attached to their own country and often use the proverb—*Tsari chhu kand thari peth qarar*—"A sparrow is content on its own branch."

About five per cent. of the Mohammedans are Shiahhs. Although a highly respectable community, these are looked upon by the orthodox Mussulmans as outcasts. Curiously enough, although the Sunnis are friendly with the Hindus, the Shiahhs abhor them. The Shiahhs are more friendly to Christians than ordinary Mohammedans. They may be recognized by their turbans, which are tied differently. Apart from shrine worship and times of special stress from disease or disaster, the Kashmiris show very little religious zeal or earnestness.

They are called *Pir-parast*, i.e., saint worshippers. "No man will dare to pass a shrine on horseback, and I once saw a striking example of the danger of neglecting this rule. A marriage-

party was crossing a stream, above which stood the shrine of a saint. All of them dismounted and passed over the bridge, but the father of the bridegroom, with the bridegroom in his arms, rode boldly over. The bridge broke, and the horse, father and son were precipitated into the stream, where they lay struggling. I ran up and rebuked the crowd for not assisting the sufferers, but they looked on gloomily and said the man richly deserved his fate. After some trouble I induced some of my own people to disentangle the men from the horse, and then one of the attendants of the shrine explained to me that within the last ten years four men who had despised the saint and had ridden over the bridge had been killed."

After the Hazrat Bal ziarut the shrine at Tsrar ranks as the most sacred. Indeed, a pilgrimage thither is supposed to obviate any special necessity for going to Mecca. In case of famine, earthquake, or cholera, thousands of people resort to Tsrar, most of them bringing offerings with them—rice, walnuts, money, a fat capon, or even a ram. Twice or thrice a year, under ordinary conditions, large fairs are held at the more important of the shrines. Thousands gather together: the roads are lined with temporary booths with a great display of sweetmeats and cakes, painted day figures, fruit and ornaments such as ear-rings, glass bangles, metal bracelets, bright-coloured skull-caps and waistcoats. Large numbers of women attend. For them it is the equivalent of the Bank Holiday. Here too may be seen the Kashmiri minstrels. These have long clarionet-like pipes and drums and produce most weird music, often in the minor key. Sometimes they are reinforced by fiddles—curious instruments, with a barbaric twang. Such companies of strolling musicians often have with them dancing boys with long hair, dressed up as women. As a general rule these people are Mussulmans. They are in special request at weddings and harvest feasts. Some of them are said to be good actors and to have valuable dresses and stage properties.

Among the more important shrines of the second rank may be mentioned that of Zain Shah at Eishmakam, which is much resorted to by boatmen, who offer up there the first locks of hair of their children. The Kulgam ziarut, with its pagoda-like roof, its painted lattice work and rich carving, is noteworthy. But many of the larger villages have very handsome ziaruts, most of which stand in impressive groves of Kabuli poplar, elm, chenar, or of the rounded dark green foliaged *Celtis Australensis*.

In the ranks of those who were converted from Hinduism there were two whose names are now regarded with great reverence. One of these is Makhdum Sahib, whose shrine is on the Hari Parbat hill, and the other Sheikh Nur Din, whose memorial is the shrine at Tsrar. These two names are constantly invoked by Kashmiris in times of trouble.

Sheikh Nur Din is the great national saint of Kashmir. He had ninety-nine disciples or khalifas. Most of the best known shrines can be traced back to one or other of these, as, for instance, the ziaruts at Shukr-ud-din, Eishmakam, Baba Marishi and Poshkar.

The successors of the khalifas were called Rishis, and some of the Pirs still bear that title.

There are about 65,000 Brahmans in Kashmir. Nearly half of these live in the city or larger towns. They are divided up into clans and families, with distinctive names, and intermarriage is not permitted within the clan.

The Hindus of Kashmir are not nearly so particular about caste observances as those in India. They will, for instance, drink water which is brought by a Mussulman, and eat food which has been cooked on the boat of a Mohammedan, and will even allow Mussulmani foster-mothers for their infants. On

the other hand, curiously enough, they refuse to eat fruit of a red colour, such as rosy apples and tomatoes.

The Brahmans have faces of the pure high Arian type. The Mohammedans have well-shaped heads, with good broad and high forehead. The nose is rather prominent and tends to be hooked, especially in the older people. The upper lip is rather deep. The average height of the Kashmiri is about five feet four inches to eight inches. It is commoner to find them below than above this. Their muscular development is good, especially the chest and arms. The legs are often rather thin and spindle-shaped.

Among the Mussulmans there are also clans, but these are only nominal; and there are no restrictions placed upon inter-marriage except with Saiyads at the top of the social scale and menials at the bottom.

There are still in the valley many families of the Chak clan, but they have settled down into quiet and peaceable cultivators. It was not always so. In the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-ab-ul-Din they gave much trouble and formed bands of marauders. It is thought that they came from some district to the north of Kashmir, and that perhaps they were originally Dards. At the north-west end of the valley there are the ruins of an old Chak city. And the beautiful Tregam pool, where a clear stream issues from the limestone rock, is believed to have been enclosed by Maddan Chak. In 1556 A.D. Ghazi Khan, son of Kazi Chak, was de facto ruler in Kashmir. And it was the Chaks under Yakub Khan and Shams-i-Chak who defeated the Emperor Akbar's forces at their first invasion of Kashmir; and they were again very nearly successful in repelling the second invasion in 1586.

There are still some Pathan colonies at the north-west end of Kashmir. Of these perhaps the most interesting is a clan of Afridis, who live in a valley opening into the Lolab. They are

differently dressed to the Kashmiris and more manly, and with their long matchlocks, swords and shields they make a brave show.

Another clan, of lower class than the Chaks, and, like most of the inferior class in Kashmir, with darker complexions than the ordinary cultivators, is that of the Galawans. These gave great trouble during the Pathan reign. They drove off flocks and herds, looted granaries and even attacked wedding parties and abducted the bride. Being well-armed and all mounted, they eluded pursuit, and it was not till Colonel Mian Singh, in the days of the Sikhs, captured and hanged the chief and exterminated a large part of the tribe that their depredations ceased. The rest were deported to Bunji, on the Gilgit road. Many, however, have returned, and horse-stealing is still not uncommon.

The lowest class in Kashmir is that of the sweepers or watus. These are extremely dishonest. Many of them are cobblers, others work in leather and straw or act as house and road sweepers. They are dark skinned and are really the gipsies of Kashmir. Their women are often quite beautiful. Those who are more settled live in little Kashmir houses. Others dwell in clusters of wattle huts, with rounded tops, perched by preference upon slightly raised ground. Some of them are eaters of carrion, and these are treated as outcasts by the Mohammedan peasantry.

Although ruled by Hindus, Kashmir is now really a Mohammedan country. For ninety-three per cent. of the people are Mussulmans. There are few Hindu cultivators, but in the villages there are many shopkeepers and subordinate revenue and forest officers of this religion. More than half of the Hindu population, however, lives in Srinagar.

The language is of Hindu origin with Sanskrit roots and allied to Western Punjabi. As may be supposed it is rich in

agricultural terms. But the vocabulary is small and inadequate for present day use, being conspicuously weak in terms both for the implements and materials of modern civilized life and for abstract ideas.

With the exception of the *Rajatarangini*, chronicles of the kings of Kashmir, some Hindu sacred literature and a few lives of Rishis or saints, there is no indigenous literature. The people are profoundly illiterate. Those who can read usually prefer Persian or Urdu to Kashmiri. In the district we sometimes find only three or four in a whole village who can read, and these usually belong to the official or priestly classes.

Kashmiri is a curious mixed language. Originally, in the days of the Hindu kings, it was doubtless to a large extent derived from Sanskrit. But the many political changes, with their introduction of Mohammedan rulers for long periods, account for the large number of Persian and Arabic words which have become incorporated. At the present time perhaps three-quarters of the vocabulary is derived from Urdu, Persian and Arabic sources, and the remainder from Sanskrit. But undoubtedly the purer the Kashmiri the larger is the proportion of words of Sanskrit derivation. There are many interesting and amusing proverbs in frequent use by the people. Some of these give an insight into the views of the people with regard to their rulers, their religious teachers, and their own village life. Not a few of them breathe out memories of their unhappy history and the oppression which they have suffered for such long periods. For instance—

"Hakimas ta hakimas nishih rachhtam Khodayo."

"O God, save me from physicians and rulers"—

is pungent, but justified by almost daily experience in the East.

"Pir na bod yakin bod."

"The pir is not great. It is credulity which is great."

This shows that in spite of the almost universal respect which is paid to the Pirs or saints, it is nevertheless fully recognized that they make great demands on the credulity of their followers.

In Kashmir, influence is often of far more value than money, because it is the source of money. This is emphasized in the following proverb—

"Kanh mat ditam
Kantil nitam."

"Don't give me anything, but listen to me."

Mohammedans are often said to present some of the characters of the Pharisees of old. That this opinion is endorsed by some at least of the Kashmiris, so far as their priests are concerned, the following proverb shows—

"Yih moullah dapi ti gatshi karun, yih moullah
kari ti gatshi na karun.

"Do as the priest says but not as he does."

Some of the proverbs enunciate sound principles in a terse phrase, e.g.—

"Manz atsun chhu kanz atsun."

"To go between, i.e., to act as a surety, is to
put your head into a mortar.

"Khairas tajil ta nyayas tatil."

"Swift to do good, slow to do evil."

Similar to our proverb, "Wolf in sheep's clothing," is the Kashmiri *Gabi buthi ramahun*, "A wolf with the face of a sheep." In his dictionary of Kashmiri proverbs and sayings, the Rev. J. Hinton Knowles has gathered together a large number of similar epigrams from the interesting folklore of the valley.

The administration of justice is still most unsatisfactory. The highest magistrates are upright and uncorrupt. But the police system is a scandal and disgrace. The people regard the police in much the same light as they do earthquakes, famine or pestilence—as a calamity. A well-known Kashmiri proverb illustrates this well. *Khuda sanz khar, tah naid sanz chep*. This means, "God gives the scaldhead, but the barber makes matters worse by wounding your head." This proverb is said to be often applied to a woman who, having lost a child in the river, is arrested by the police on trumped-up charge of murder. False charges of this kind are extremely common. I remember being told of two men who were attacked by a bear and one of them was killed. The other was promptly arrested by the police and not released until he had paid a substantial sum. In police inquiries the innocent usually suffer quite as much as the guilty, and the giving and taking of bribes is shameless and notorious. Except where the evidence is unusually strong, it is almost impossible to secure a conviction, in cases in which the accused is a man of means. The whole police force needs radical reform. And to effect this it ought to have European officers until a reliable local staff has been trained.

It is rare now to find a village of any size in which there are no old patients of the Kashmir Mission Hospital. What is their attitude towards the Institution? It may be depicted in an imaginary conversation, which we will suppose to be held under a chenar tree near the village tank. Those who take part in it are —Ramzana, a villager; Mohammed Sheikh, headman of village; Lachman Pandit, a Hindu shopkeeper; and Maulvi Nur-ud-Din, Mohammedan priest.

Ramzana (entering his village after having been in the Mission Hospital for disease of the bone of his right leg for two months). How are you all?

Mohammed Sheikh. Quite well, thank God. How are you? they did not cut off your leg then!

Ramzana. No. I thought they were going to and tried to run away, but they caught hold of me, and before I knew where I was they had put me on a table, tied a bandage above my knee and given me some curious stuff to smell. I know I struggled, but soon everything began to whirl round and round, and then I do not remember anything more till I found myself in a very large room, in a comfortable bed, with a red blanket and white sheets and a floor shining like glass. On either side of me and opposite there were rows of beds full of men and boys, who all seemed as jolly as anything.

Mohammed Sheikh. Yes, I know. I went there with Farzi, you know, my little granddaughter. There was a crowd in the room where we had to wait for two hours before we could see the doctor. He came in to see us at the beginning, and read some verses out of the Holy Gospel, and then told us what the meaning was, and he talked Kashmiri just like a book. Farzi was quite blind and they did something to her eyes. The did not give her anything on a towel to smell, but dropped something into her eyes and then they put in what looked like a needle. The funny thing was that it did not seem to hurt. Farzi never said a word. And the doctor held up two fingers and said, "How many are there"? and I was absolutely astounded to hear her say "two" The wisdom (hikmat) of these foreigners is wonderful. And they have very gentle hands. Then they took Farzi and put her into a women's ward, where there were several other little girls, and there was miss sahib, who was so kind and gave the children dolls and toys and they had a curious box which you could wind up like a clock and it then produced music like I once heard played at the Palace, where His Highness the Maharaja Sahib Bahadur lives. And the miss sahib used to come every day and read from the Holy Gospel about the Spirit of God, the Holy Jesus, Who was sinless and went about doing good, and Who died to take away our sins.

Ramzana. Why, that was just what the doctor sahib did at our end to the hospital, and we had great discussions when he

went away. One man there, an old fakir, said that he had travelled in many countries and been to Africa too, and that lots of the English were bad and violent and drank too much and used dreadful language. But that he had found out that those who did this did not believe in their own religion and hated the name of Jesus, and that those who were disciples of the Holy Jesus were quite different. And he told us about an old colonel sahib who had been very good to him, and he said, "Since I met him I believe in Christ and mean to obey His words."

Maulvi Nur-ud-Din. There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the Prophet of God (Other villagers join in repeating the Mohammedan Kalima.) Maulvi-Nur-ud-Din. These foreigners have a Book and they believe in God, in a way, but they do not acknowledge the Prophet Mohammed, and their Scriptures are tempered with and spoiled, and they say that Hazrat Isa was God Incarnate, which is rank heresy.

Mohammed Sheikh. I don't know. I remember the miss sahib used to tell us that you could tell a tree by its fruits, and she said the Christians led purer and holier lives than the Mussulmans, owing to the fact that they believe in Christ and He helps them.

Ramzana. That was just what the doctor sahib said.

Lachman Pandit. You Mohammedans think you are the only people who believe in one God, but we Hindus do, and our poet Tulsi Das has taught' us that God is one and our Father, and He is all powerful. Why should He not be able to become incarnate as the Christians say He did? I, too, was in the Mission Hospital twenty years ago, when I broke my leg, and I shall always remember the teaching I heard there and the care which I received, far more than I had had from my own people. I would long ago have liked to become a Christian, believing that religion to be the purest of all and the most full

of hope and love. In it I see the fulfilment of much which the best and noblest Hindus have striven after. But I dare not. I should become an outcast and lose all that makes life worth having.

Mohammed Sheikh. Quite right, Panditji. Every one should stick to his own religion. If God had meant you to be a Christian, He would have made you one.

Maulvi Nur-ud-Din. No, no. There is only one true religion, "La Illahu illah Allah." But I admit that if all Christians were like those at the Mission Hospital, we could live with them on brotherly terms. My father died three years ago. I hated the idea of his dying under an unbeliever's roof. And yet the old man died quite happy. He was a true Mussulman, but he had a very special reverence for Hazrat Isa.

Ramzana. That's just it. Nearly all the people seem to learn that there. When the doctor sahib was reading prayers in the ward, at least ten people joined in, saying Amen fervently. Now there is Lassoo. He is quite different since he was there. I am sure he does not tell nearly so many lies, and he no longer beats his women folk. I believe he has a copy of the Gospels in his house.

Maulvi Nur-ud-Din. He had better mind what he is about or I will have him excommunicated. Tell him to bring the book to me. But it is time for prayers. Run and tell Rasula to call the faithful.

(They all walk away slowly, except the Pandit, who goes down to the stream to fill his brass lota.)

(1915)

CHAPTER 8

THE PEOPLE OF KASHMIR

By

Francis Younghusband

Kashmir is very generally renowned for the beauty of its women and the deftness and taste of its shawl-weavers. And this reputation is, I think, well deserved. Sir Walter Lawrence indeed says that he has seen thousands of women in the villages, and cannot remember, save one or two exceptions, ever seeing a really beautiful face. But whether it is that Sir Walter was unfortunate, or that he is particularly hard to please, or that villages are not the abodes of Kashmir beauties, certain it is that the visitor, with an ordinary standard of beauty, as he passes along the river or the roads and streets, does see a great many more than one or two really beautiful women. He will often so strikingly handsome women, with clear-cut features, large dark eyes, well-marked eyebrows, and a general Jewish appearance. As to the deftness and taste of the weavers the shawls themselves are the best testimony.

The population of the whole Kashmir State is 2,905,578, and of the Kashmir Province 1,157,394. Of these 93 per cent of the Kashmir Province and 74 per cent of the whole State are Mohamedan, and the remainder chiefly Hindu. But the rulers are Hindus, and consequently the Mohamedans are as much in the shade as Hindus are in States ruled by Mohamedans. The ruling family is also alien, coming not from the valley itself, but from Jammu, on the far side of the mountain to the south.

The inhabitants were not, however, always Mohamedans. Originally they were Hindus. It was only in the fourteenth century that they were converted—mostly by force—to become Mohamedans. The present indigenous Hindus of the valley are generally known as Pundits, and Kashmir Pundits are well known over India for their acuteness and subtlety of mind, their intelligence and quick-wittedness. They prefer priestly literary, and clerical occupation, but in the severe competition of life many have been compelled to make more use of their hands than their brains, and have had to take up agriculture, and become cooks, bakers, confectioners, and tailors, and, indeed, to follow any trade except the following which, according to Lawrence, are barred to them—cobbler, potter, corn-frier, porter, boatman, carpenter, mason, or fruit-seller. It is hard for us occidentals to understand why the line should have been drawn at these apparently harmless occupations, but those of us who have lived in India know that the Hindu does fix his lines with extraordinary sharpness and rigidity, and a Kashmir Pundit would as much think of working as a boatman as an English gentleman would think of wearing a black tie at a formal dinner-party.

The Kashmir Pundits are essentially towns-people, and out of the total number about half live in the city of Srinagar. But they are also scattered sparsely through the villages, where the visitor will easily distinguish them by the caste mark on the forehead. On the whole they have a cultured look about them and a superior bearing.

The Mohamedans form the large majority of the population, and, having no caste, are engaged in various occupations, and are found in every grade of social life. And the Mohamedan gentleman of good position has something singularly attractive about him. He combines dignity with deference to a noteworthy degree, and between him and the European there is not that gulf of caste fixed which makes such a bar to intercourse with Hindus. Not that the Mohamedans of

India have not absorbed to a certain degree the atmosphere of caste with which they are surrounded. They are not so entirely free in their customs and behaviour as their co-religionists in purely Mohamedan countries. When travelling in Turkestan I lived with Mohamedans, slept in their houses and tents, ate with them, and generally consorted with them with a freedom that Mohamedans in India would think prejudicial to some vague sense of caste which, theoretically, they are not supposed to have, but which in practice they have absorbed from the atmosphere of Hinduism which they breathe. The Mohamedan, even of Kashmir, is not quite so unrestricted as the Mohamedan of Central Asia. Still, he is a very attractive gentleman. He is not easily found, for nowadays he lives in some pride of seclusion, but when discovered he is found to be grave, sedate, polite, and full of interesting conversation, and bearing with him a sense of former greatness when his religion was in the ascendant in the seats of power. These old-fashioned Mohamedan gentlemen have little or no English education, but they have a culture of their own; and among the mullas may be found men of great learning.

Other interesting types of Kashmir Mohamedans are found among the headmen of the picturesque little hamlets along the foot-hills. Here may be seen fine old patriarchal types, just as we picture to ourselves the Israelitish heroes of old. Some, indeed, say, though I must admit without much authority, that these Kashmiris are of the lost tribes of Israel. There lately died in the Punjab the founder of a curious sect, who maintained that he was both the Messiah of the Jews and the Mahdi of the Mohamedans; that Christ had never really died upon the Cross, but had been let down and had disappeared, as He had foretold, to seek that which was lost, by which He meant the lost tribes of Israel; and that He had come to Kashmir and was buried in Srinagar. It is a curious theory, and was worked out by this founder of the Quadiani sect in much detail. There resided in Kashmir some 1900 years ago a saint of the name of Yus Asaf, who preached in parables and used many of the

same parables as Christ used, as, for instance, the parable of the sower. His tomb is in Srinagar, and the theory of this founder of the Quadiani sect is that Yus Asaf and Jesus are one and the same person.

When the people are in appearance of such a decided Jewish cast it is curious that such a theory should exist; and certainly, as I have said, there are real Biblical types to be seen everywhere in Kashmir, and especially among the upland villages. Here the Israelitish shepherd tending his flocks and herds may any day be seen.

Yet apart from this, the ordinary Kashmiri villager is not an attractive being. Like his house he is dirty, untidy, and slipshod, and both men and women wear the most unbecoming clothing, without either shape, grace, or colour. But the physique of both men and women is excellent. They are of medium height, but compared with the people of India of exceptional muscular strength. The men carry enormous loads. In the days before the cart-road was constructed, they might be seen carrying loads of apples sometimes up to and over 200 lbs. in weight; and the labour they do in the rice-fields is excessively severe.

Good as is their physique, the Kashmiris are, however, for some quite unaccountable reason, lamentably lacking in personal courage. A Kashmiri soldier is almost a contradiction in terms. There is not such a thing. They will patiently endure and suffer, but they will not fight. And they are very careful of the truth. As an American once said, they set such value on the truth that they very seldom use it.

Their good points are, that they are intelligent and can turn their hands to most things. They are, says Lawrence, excellent cultivators when they are working for themselves. A Kashmiri can weave good woollen cloth, make first-rate baskets, build himself a house, make his own sandals, his own ropes,

and a good bargain. He is kind to his wife and children, and divorce scandals or immorality among villagers are rarely heard of.

He is not a cheery individual, like many hillmen in the Himalayas, but he seems to be fond of singing; and dirty as he, his wife, his house and all that belongs to him is, he has one redeeming touch of the aesthetic—all round the village he plants his graves with iris and narcissus. The final conclusion one has, then, is that if only he would wash, if only he would dress his wife in some brighter and cleaner clothes, and if only he would make his house stand upright, then with the good points he already has, and with all Nature to back him, he would make Kashmir literally perfection.

The boatmen, who are the class with whom visitors to Kashmir come most intimately into contact, are a separate tribe from the villagers. They are said to claim Noah as their ancestor, and certain it is that if they did not borrow the pattern of their boats from Noah's ark, Noah must have borrowed the pattern from them. They are known as Hanji or Manjis, and live permanently on their boats with their families complete. Some of these boats will carry between six and seven thousand pounds of grain. Others are light passenger boats. They all have their little cooking place on board, and a gigantic wooden pestle and mortar in which the women pound the rice. Both men and women have extremely fluent and sharp tongues. They are quick-witted, and can turn their hands to most things, and make themselves useful in a variety of ways.

Besides carrying goods and passengers among the numerous waterways of Kashmir, some gather the singhare (water nuts) on the Wular Lake, others work market gardens on the Dal Lake, others fish, and others dredge for driftwood in the rivers.

CHAPTER 9

THE KASHMIRIS

By

C.E. Tyndale Biscoe

Before our visit to the capital, Srinagar, it would be as well to know something of the character and general look of the inhabitants of that very picturesque and dirty city.

The Kashmiris are of the Aryan stock, and are as a rule quite good-looking. The women are considered to be beautiful. I must say that I have not myself seen many beauties, but possibly if they were clean and wore becoming garments I might have reason to change my opinion. Also most of the upper-class women are never seen in the streets, and I am told by the ladies who visit the zenanas that some of the women are really beautiful. Many people think that the Kashmiris belong to the lost tribes of Israel, as many and of getting the better of their neighbours is very strong.

Their complexion is fair as compared with their Indian neighbours; those living in towns are fairer than the country folk. Some of them might easily pass for Europeans. The Hindu women and boys have generally refined features, quite of Greeks type. Many have rosy cheeks and pink complexions, and a few have blue eyes and auburn hair ; but auburn hair is not a popular colour, and they dislike any remark on the fact. One especially notices their fair complexion when they are with Indians or Eurasians—i.e. those of mixed birth, now known as Anglo- Indians.

A certain scene impressed itself on my mind in this respect. It was that of an Anglo-Indian and his servant. This Anglo-Indian, who happened to be exceptionally dark, was walking to his office on a hot day. His servant, a Kashmiri, who was scarcely distinguishable from a fair European, for he had blue eyes and pink cheeks, and a bright, happy face withal, was walking behind holding up as umbrella to shade the dusky gentleman's face from the sun, and carrying his books. Many of the dwellers in this land are very keen to keep up their position and consider it *infra dig.* to be seen carrying anything, and also like to be followed about by a servant, according to Eastern custom.

What amusement the Pandit officials used to afford one every morning in days gone by, when the head of a department was making his triumphal march from his house to his office, at the gentlemanly pace of the ox, two miles an hour, followed by his subordinate clerks and servants. I have counted as many as thirty marching at this funereal pace in order to show that they were gentlemen, and that time was no object. They all walked in single file, as one clerk was greater in position than the other and therefore could not walk abreast. The head official would be walking in front, with his lower chest well to the fore, and as he swaggered along he would chuck his words behind him to those following. Sometimes he would condescend to call one up to him, and he would come before the great man with his hands in the attitude of prayer, and head at the correct angle of obeisance. Most of this small army of followers, I was told, were dependents of the household, and were poor relatives living on the rich man's bounty, who paid for their keep by swelling his retinue and thus bringing honour and conferring dignity upon the great man and his house. The days of slow progression are fast departing, as it is being discovered that time is valuable.

I was on one occasion on a journey with my Brahman munshi; we were riding ponies. It was a lovely day, and my pony seemed to be aware of this fact, and we were just going sixteen

to the dozen, when I became aware that the munshi was not enjoying this headlong pace as much as I was, for he was crying out for me to stop. So I reined up, and then up came the Brahman munshi, red in the face and breathing hard. "Oh, Sahib," he said, "why do you ride like this, for kings always ride slow?" "Yes," I said, "they may do so, but I am not a king. So come on."

However, the munshi was almost in tears, so I had mercy on him, and we rode at a more gentlemanly pace, but not quite that of the kings' pace of which he was thinking.

In physique the dwellers in towns naturally differ much from those in the country and in the mountains. In the towns the people are weak and undersized, partly from their indoor occupations, such as weaving and embroidery work, where they sit all day in stuffy, small rooms, or are clerks bending over their desks, who never think of taking exercise after office hours by joining in games. They have no hobbies with which to fill their spare time.

But especially are they a weak lot on account of the filthiness of the towns and fetid air, which make them sickly and anaemic. Then their morals are not high, to say the least of it; the most of them suffer from bone or skin diseases. Epidemics of various kinds play havoc among them. Everyone has small-pox, with the exception of the few that have been vaccinated; every fifth person is pitted with small-pox on some part of his body, and many are blinded from it.

Every four or five years cholera in epidemic form sweeps them off in hundreds, and sometimes in thousands, during the summer months, Typhoid is rampant in the city, and now consumption is increasing toll of the population.

With the advance of education the people are gradually learning that sickness is caused by germs and not by the will of

Allah, or in the case of Hindus by the caprice of their various gods and goddesses. For example, when small-pox attacks a family, they seem rather pleased than otherwise, as they say the goddess has deigned to visit their humble dwelling. This is one of the reasons why the Hindus object to vaccination. It will be a slow business to alter the conditions of the towns in the matter of sanitation, as the people themselves are against improvement. Their answer to any change is always the same—namely, "Our fathers and forefathers were always very happy and contented under the existing order of things, so why should not we be satisfied?" A certain Health Officer, who had been to England for his medical training, and was out to do his duty, being keen on his work, came to me one morning very much upset, for there was an especially filthy alley leading from the main street to the river which was much frequented. He wished to have it paved with bricks so that it could be flushed with water and kept clean.

The Brahman priests of the neighbourhood had come to him and ordered him to desist, using the usual forefather argument. So as the Health Officer stood firm to his resolve they threatened that, if he attempted to pave the alley, they themselves would lie down flat on the road and he would have to lay the bricks over them. The doctor was certainly in a fix. My advice to him was to carry on, for the priests would soon have had enough of bricks. But he shook his head, saying that he dared not do that. So the Brahman priests won the day, and that alley remains what it always has been a latrine for the priests and their families, a pestilential spot. It is not easy to hurry the East.

In the villages the habits of the people are the same as those of the towns, only as more fresh air is obtainable the health and physique of the people is better. One's nose always tells one from afar that one is nearing a village, and the people love to have it so.

The outdoor life of the villagers is, of course, a healthy one, and their bodies become strong from constant labour, but in the winter they also suffer much from disease, as they shut themselves up in their houses and froust. They keep their cows in the lower rooms, and block up every hole and cranny with mud and straw to keep out any fresh air, consequently the room becomes so hot that the moisture literally drips from the ceiling. The family sit in the room above; thus the heat of the cows, coming up from below, keeps them happy and comfortable all the winter, and with no extra expense. Truly, those in the West, with coal at such a fabulous price, have something to learn from the East. Yet, notwithstanding the unhealthy conditions of the villagers in the winter, the peasants are physically strong.

In the autumn-time, on the Jhelum Valley road, before bullock carts came into use, you would see hundreds of coolies carrying the great weight of from two to three maunds each (a maund = 80 lb.) of apples on their backs, a journey of 200 miles. Each man carries a stout stick about two and a half feet in length with a cross-bar. So when he wishes to rest he places this stick behind him under his load. By this method he can rest his load without trouble. Their custom is to trot with their load about fifty yards at a time and then rest : in this manner their load of apples would reach Rawal Pindi in twelve days. The women make muscle through their daily occupations, by grinding at the mill and husking their rice with pestle and mortar. The mortar is a hollowed trunk of a tree about two feet high and a foot and a half wide at the top. The pestle is a beam of wood about five feet long cut thin in the middle, so that it can comfortably be held with one hand. It is heavy work and it takes from an hour to an hour and a half to husk the rice for one meal. Then besides their housework they have work in the fields as well. It is a hard, healthy life and they thrive on it.

The coolies and other hard workers employ an ingenious method for refreshing themselves when they are fagged out.

The tired man will lie prone on the ground on his stomach, and call his pal to massage him. This is done by his pal walking up and down on the top of him very slowly. He begins at his heels and walks up his legs and back, to his neck, digging his toes into the muscles of his legs, his back and neck, as he slowly moves up and down him. The man who is prone keeps grunting as the toes of his pal do their work. After a few minutes of this operation he gets up and shakes himself, and then does the same kindness for his pal. After this they both shoulder their loads and go off in good spirits. I have never tried this particular form of massage, but I have had experience of other forms of their massage which they so willingly perform on one, and I have found it most refreshing.

Those who live in the mountains, especially those on the frontier states, such as Gilgit, Hunzar and Nagar, are a fine type of men, hardly mountaineers, and of quite a different stamp to the Kashmiri of the valley. They are born sportsmen, hunting the ibex among their native rocky haunts, and have become like the ibex in agility and hardiness.

(1922)

CHAPTER 10

MOHAMMEDANS AND HINDUS

By
C.E. Tyndale Biscoe

While the two boats are far apart the men are very bold, and say what they will do to one another if they could but come to grips. Then when of the boats drifts on to the other, so close that they are touching one another, the warriors turn their backs upon each other and with much contempt say that they would not defile themselves by touching one another even with the end of their bargepole; or when someone taunts them with cowardice, one will grip the other and cry out to his wife, saying : "Hold me! hold me! or I shall commit murder." Then the wives, screaming all the while, fall upon their respective husbands, who allow themselves to be torn apart. The boats now swing apart again, and both sides take a breather, only to start afresh.

Often this noisy battle lasts until both sides are utterly exhausted and their voices are but harsh whispers. When this is the case each party takes its basket hencoops, which every boat possesses, and turn them upside down, which is a sign that there will be pax for the present, and this peace may last several hours, even to the next day. Then when one of the parties feels refreshed, supposing the enemy boat has not moved away, he will reverse the hen-coop and the fight will be renewed. These hangi fights used to be far more frequent than they are now, so that on a trip through the city you were entertained by several, coming in for the different phases of the play

as you travelled along. No material damage is ever done in their fights except, if possible, to the character of the women, for there is no limit to the foul abuse and insinuations. I say "if possible," for the boat people as a class have no morals. They have got a bad name and they live up to it. The name "hangi" is itself a term of abuse—i.e. if you wish to describe a man as thoroughly bad you say he is only a hangi.

I will take this opportunity of warning my fellow-countrymen who are new to this country to be on their guard when hiring living- boats for trips, such as "doongers" and house-boats, for very many have proved to be veritable death-traps to the morals of young Englishmen, and in certain cases I have known them to end in speedy death. Never shall I forget the deathbed of one bright, cheery boy who implored me to tell anyone likely to be entrapped as he had been, so that through his suffering and death they might be saved from this terrible disease and death. He, like so many, was caught by one of the many scoundrels who are out to grab the money of young Englishmen, using women as their bait.

There is one special native firm which has made itself rich in this traffic. Against them I have warned many, and continue to do so, and have told the head of the firm that I will ever do so.

New-comers who have been harassed by this class of biped sometimes come to me for help and advice. I generally give them two instances of fact to guide their actions. I will pass them on to you now.

A colonel came to me in great distress, asking for advice. He had just come up the river from Baramulla to Srinagar, a journey of three days. He was paying off his boat when the boatman demanded Rs. 500, the proper fare being then Rs.3.8. On his asking the reason for the extortion, the boatman calmly told him that he had a dancing girl on board and that if he did

not pay up the Rs. 500 he would let it be known far and wide that the Colonel Sahib had been living with this woman for three days in his boat during the journey up the river.

The other case was that of a subaltern who found himself in a somewhat similar predicament, and he settled the matter without asking anyone's advice, for with one well-directed blow this loathsome biped disappeared out of the boat into the river, and the matter was settled without further ado. This particular biped happened to be the agent for the firm I have just mentioned. There are certain times in one's life when fists are both useful and necessary, and this is certainly the sort of occasion when we can with a clear conscience enjoy again those times we had in our schooldays when we punched a bully's head. It is of interest to note that that great soldier General John Nicholson of Delhi, in the early days, when he was British Agent in Kashmir, tried to put a stop to this filthy traffic.

I cannot leave the boatmen in such depths of infamy, for in every man, and in every class of men, there is some gold somewhere.

I respect the boatmen in their work as boatmen, for they have delighted me over and over again in their knowledge of boatcraft, for they are kings at it. I delight to see them in their boats forging up the river against a strong stream with pole or paddle, taking advantage of every swirl and eddy behind a projecting wall or pier of a bridge. They seem to know every crack and hole in the stone walls in which to insert their pole, and then put all their weight on to it just at the very moment when they can make full use of the shove.

Then, again, they can work really hard. They will tow your boat up-stream all day, and if really necessary will continue all night.

I was blessed with the possession of a man who was king of boatmen, Ismalia by name, bless him! That man would do anything for me. No man on the river or lake understood boatcraft better than he. In storm on the lake he never lost his head : whilst those around him would be screaming and jumping about in delirium, women tearing their hair and garments, Ismalia would be sticking to his job. He would jump into river or lake no matter what the temprature of the water might be, if he though it necessary, or if ordered to do so. In times of danger he was at his best. In the big floods, at city fires, in epidemics, he was always on the spot.

In floods when practically all his brethren were making use of their golden opportunities for loot he was out saving life and property freely. I could write a book on Ismalia.

There was one thing that Ismalia feared, and that was the tongue of his spouse, and I do not blame him, for he had to live in the very small space of a boat with her always. I grieved over this many a time and oft, and tried myself to tame that tongue, but I regret to say I failed in the matter of bringing relief to my king of boatmen..

He might have relieved himself of that tongue if he had followed the example of another sorely tried "bhai" who possessed a spouse very similar, for she always did exactly the opposite to that which she was asked or advised to do. While crossing a rough bit of water the husband asked his wife not to sit on the edge of the boat, but to sit on the seat in the centre, otherwise she might be jerked overboard. She therefore, of course, sat on the edge of the boat, and before long she disappeared out of the boat and out of sight. When the boat reached the land the husband immediately walked along the bank to see if he could see any trace of his wife. The boatmen were astonished to see him walking upstream instead of down. "Ah!" said he, "you don't know my wife; she always goes the opposite way."

Ismalia might have been rid of that tongue likewise, but he endured with patience and in silence, for that tongue also fought Ismalia's enemies many times and oft, to which fact I can bear witness. I said previously that the boatmen as a class are an utterly immoral lot, or words to that effect. Ismalia was an exception, for he was as white as they were black.

We always trusted our children with him, for we knew they would be absolutely safe under his care; no one could harm them if Ismalia were at hand. Let us hope that there are many other boatmen something like Ismalia whom I do not happen to have come across. Ismalia had a paralytic stroke and passed away from us into the fuller life, and I look forward to meeting again that king of boatmen. If the River Styx is still flowing and old Charon wants relief it would be the sort of job that Ismalia would love, and mighty cheering it would be to see his smiling face and red beard once more as he greeted one, paddle in hand.

I said above that the boatmen do not indulge in wordy fights so often as in the past, and that reminds me of quite the opposite practice of "saying their prayers," which also has become less frequent, for at midday one would see conspicuous places monopolised by men in the attitude of prayer, standing on the top of a wall, or on the roof of their boat, going through the genuflections according to Mohammedan ritual, which has to be performed three times a day, at sunrise, at midday and at sunset. The women, of course, do not pray in public, nor do they enter the mosques. In some of the richer houses the mullah will read Arabic prayers with them, which they seldom understand.

The faithful have to offer their *nemaz* (prayer) five times a day. Every Mussulman commences his "*nemaz*" by standing up with his face towards the Kaaba. He places his thumbs underneath his ears with fingers stretched out. This position is called "*takbir*." Then he lowers his hands and places his right hand

upon the left on his stomach or chest, forming the word "Allah" with the fingers of his right hand. This position is "tah-rim." Then he bends his body in the shape of a crescent, placing his hands on his knees. This is called "raku." Subsequently he touches the ground with his forehead. this is called "sajda." This process is repeated twice, and lastly he sits on his left leg. This is called "qada." After the completion of the nemaz he turns his head first towards the right and then towards the left, saluting the two guardian angels "Keraman" and "Katebin," the recorders of his deeds.

I imagine the reason of there being less praying among the boatmen is that as they are becoming richer they feel more independent, and have not so much to fear from the mullahs or from the religious opinion of their fellow-Mohammedans, for praying in public raises them in the esteem of their co-religionists. It requires courage for Mohammedans not to pray in public, just as it requires courage on the part of Christians to be seen praying in the street or public place.

This praying in public is no criterion of a religious life, for I have noticed that those who parade their praying most are the men least to be trusted.

Of course we find this the same with Christians; we naturally fight shy of the religions talking lot. In Kashmir anyway religion and life have nothing to do with one another ; the better-living men do not parade their religion, and vice versa.

As one floats down the river one sees many bathing from the river steps. They are Brahmans; and there they stand knee-deep performing their ceremonial ablutions.

The Hindus generally rise very early. Before leaving their beds they lie on their stomachs and offer a short prayer. Those who are of a religious turn of mind sit square over a clean

piece of cloth or a carpet of kusba grass or the skin of an antelope and tell their beads, reciting a sacred Vedic mantra like the Buddhist ; or they practise concentration of mind or regulation of breath for some time. This is done in absolute privacy. Then they leave the bedroom and go to the river-side, and some of them perform necessary ablutions, while others sit for some time on the bank and perform daily worship (*sendhia*).

Having stripped himself, the Hindu sits on the steps of the bank. First he washes his left foot and then the right. This is because the body is believed by the Hindus to be androgynous, and the left side is considered to have feminine characteristics. As woman (*shakti*) is believed to be superior to man, the left foot is washed first. And every woman always sits on the left of her husband whenever they have to perform a religious ceremony. No ceremony is complete unless the woman takes part in it. Most Hindus worship God in the form of woman. Would that these Hindu men would put into practice some at least of their doctrines with regard to women, for then much of their unnecessary suffering would be lessened. Having washed his foot, he holds a handful of water and invokes through Vedic incantations all the spirits of the sacred rivers, such as Ganges, Jamna, Gaya, etc. With this water he washes his face, and then his Brahmanical thread and the tuft of hair on the top of his head with a separate mantra. After this he raises his hands with open palms towards the sun, invoking Varuna, the god of the air, to make him clean. Then he sprinkles water three times towards his left.

After this he places a piece of clay on the bank, divides it into three parts, sprinkles water over these portions with separate mantras, invoking the sun god to cleanse him. He picks up the first part and throws it towards all the four points of the compass; with the second part he besmears his body, and the third part he throws into the water. Then holding a handful of water he steps into the river and begins to bathe. When standing in the river he sprinkles water three times, in the

name of the ancestors, in the name of ancient sages of India, and last of all in the name of the gods. Then he comes out of the water and puts on clothes, and again sits on the bank to regulate his breath and perform the remaining part of the ceremony. First he inhales a long breath through the left nostril, retains it for a few seconds and then exhales it very, very slowly through the right nostril. It is said that mental calm follows this breathing practice which lasts for some time. This is done three or four times. The ceremony is concluded with special movements of the hands, telling of beads and sprinkling of water in a peculiar way too tedious to be described here. That part of the worship which particularly attracts one's attention is the squirting of the water from their mouths, reminding one of a well-worked fire-pump.

All the way down the river you see washings of all sorts. Hindu women are continually washing their brass pots.

Hindus may not cook their food in anything else but brass utensils; they eat off brass dishes and drink out of brass cups. It is amusing to see Hindus trying to drink hot tea out of their brass cups, for the metal is always much hotter to the lips than the tea. They try to get at their hot drink without burning their lips. If they used earthenware or china, they could only use them once, and then they would throw them away as defiled and not able to be cleaned. They consider brass can be cleaned as other material cannot be cleaned. Hence one sees the Hindu women scrubbing away at their brass pots with sand and mud, but chiefly one notices at the outside, I suppose because it shows most and is easier to clean than the inside, especially if the neck is small. By the side of the brass scrubber you will see the priest with his brass and stone gods, which he has brought down to wash, or to perform some religious ceremony.

The priest first invokes the particular god through his mantras. Having done that, he begins to bathe the god which he believes to be in that idol. He mixes a little milk with water

and begins to pour it on the top of it; meanwhile he recites a certain portion of Vedas called "Rudra mantra." This takes him about twenty minutes or more, according to the leisure of the priest. Then he wipes the idol with a towel and covers it with flowers and rice. He does not necessarily use a clean towel.

Here, again, squats a Hindu woman cleaning a fish with a knife, scraping off its scales inside (a Mohammedan, of course, having been the sinner who caught and killed the fish), and just below her will be a man cleaning his teeth with a piece of willow twig (the favourite tooth-brush), scooping up the water with his hand, with which he gargles. One often wonders how much of the inside of the fish or scale gets mixed up with the gargle. He also sniffs water up his nose, and altogether has quite a good wash-up.

Below the mouth-washer the dhobi is washing the clothes, which is an amusing sight if the clothes do not happen to be one's own, as he takes up the garments one after another and dashes them with all his might on to the stone steps, or on to a smooth rock which he has placed in position, on which to smash buttons or anything else breakable ; then he squeezes out the garments by placing his feet on one end and twisting them round with both hands. He now spreads out the garments on the muddy bank of the river to be bleached by the sun. Whilst he is smashing more clothes on the rock he is obliged to keep his weather eye open in order to be in time to scare off pariah dogs and chickens, which seem to take a special delight in walking over anything which they should not ; or sometimes it is a strolling cow or Brahmani bull which takes a fancy for a towel upon which to try her or his teeth; or it may be a crow has seen a pocket-handkerchief or a coloured sock which he thinks would not look amiss in his nest. Hence a dhobi's work is not altogether easy when he chooses the river bank for his washing ground.

English mem-sahibs often think ill of their dhobis; and sometimes they may have cause, for I have known a dhobi when he has lost a handkerchief cut a large one in two and so make up the number that was sent to the wash. I have often known a dhobi fail to return a pretty garment and give quite a picturesque excuse, when, if the truth were known, at that particular moment some gallant bridegroom would be wearing that very article as he parades round the town on his white and beautifully caparisoned horse, his handsome features being partly hidden by a silver and gold veil, and all set off by the final flourish of the peacock's feather on the top of his head. As a matter of fact, the dhobis are on the whole a great comfort, for they can turn out excellent work, and then when you come to the price as compared with English laundries it is marvelously cheap. Up to a year ago I paid three rupees only for one hundred garments washed—i.e. from a pocket-handkerchief to a bed sheet—which works out to rather more than one halfpenny per article; now it is more than a penny an article.

When one is in England paying the washing bill one just longs for one's far dhobi. As a matter of fact, they are generally rather thin, but I have had the pleasure of having my clothes washed by two fat dhobis. One of them was a wise man in another matter than in clothes. My wife had taken him with the household to our hut in the forest, and he washed contentedly, we thought, in the lake. But he asked leave one day to return to the city to visit his family, promising to be back in three days' time; but he came not back, and in his stead he sent his lean old father, with a message to say that the neighbourhood of the hut in the forest was not healthy on account of the bears and panthers, especially the latter, and so he sent his old father to do the washing.

At every ghat or yaribal, which means a meeting-place of friends, and consists of a flight of stone steps, generally filthy and most abominably odoriferous, will be found a large stone with a smooth round hole in the centre. This is the public

washing-tub in which amateur dhobis wash their clothes by trampling on and squeezing them with their feet as grapes are crushed in the wine vats. It is a pleasure to see people thus at work, for one can be certain that they will have clean feet, which is a rare sight in this land.

Among the many entertainments on the river banks is the sight of three or four women or girls sitting in a ring presenting their backs to each other. Each one seems to be scratching the head of the one in front, but, as a matter of fact, they have reverted to type, to their ancestors of the forests, and are relieving one another of irritating lodgers—in fact, according to Scout law, each doing a good turn.

It is extraordinary how dirty the Kashmiris are, considering the amount of water that is around them everywhere, and though washing opportunities are at hand they prefer to wear dirty garments. They have told me, when I have suggested washing, that it wears out clothes to wash them. Self-respecting women are obliged to wear dirty garments, for if they wore clean ones they might be taken for women of loose life.

I remember my pleasure, when I visited Burma, to be surrounded by clean people in bright colours, and to see women mixing freely with the men, and all happy and jolly together, without anyone thinking it evil or immodest. Kashmir was once like Burma, a Buddhist country. I wonder if the people were then clean and jolly like the Burmans.

I have spoken of the unpleasant smells on the river, but now and again one is cheered when one passes a part of sawyers at work on deodar logs, which is at once delightful and refreshing. Again, when one passes boats loaded with spices, or when meals are being prepared in the evening, one has quite a succession of interesting and pleasing whiffs. But nevertheless it is as well for a man to be armed with a pipe or

a cigar, and a lady with smelling-bottle, when a trip is made on the river or in the streets of Srinagar.

Practically at ever ghat you see water-carriers at work. Sometimes they are men called "bhishties," or heavenly men, and truly they are such in the hot weather. They carry a goat-skin and a wooden ladle, but generally this work is done by women, which is always pleasing to the eye, as the women carry themselves so elegantly when they carry the terra-cotta-coloured earthen jar on their shoulder or head. Water-carrying is supposed to be women's work, but real heavy work it is for women. To lift up a large earthenware jar full of water from the ground and hoist it up to the shoulder or to the top of the head is no light task. Times out of number have I seen men standing or sitting close by, but they never will give a helping hand, the reason being that it is not the custom, and that's the end of it.

We have been so taken up with the life and manner of the people on the river banks that we have not noticed the houses that overhang the river, which, though untidy-looking, are often most picturesque. Most of the houses are built with wooden frames filled in with brick. Built in this manner, they are the better able to withstand earthquake shocks than those built of solid masonry.

If you look at a house just completed by a Hindu you will notice an old and broken earthenware pot slung from one of the projecting beams. This is considered to be most important, as it keeps off the evil eye, for when the devil notices a nice new-built house he may take a fancy to it; but on closer inspection he sees the old broken pot attached to it, so realises that he has made a mistake in thinking it to be a new building, and hence will not covet it. This belief in the evil eye pervades all things, whether it be new-born babies or carpets. Mothers purposely keep the faces of their children unwashed, to ward off the evil eye. When they show you a baby you must always make some disparaging remark. The mother would be terribly

upset if you said the child was beautiful or fat. As it is such a delicate matter, it is best not to commit oneself, but simply say: "What a child!"

If it is a carpet you will, if you look carefully, always find some flaw in it as to colour or pattern purposely made.

The houses as a rule need no flaws purposely made in their construction, as they are so often off the straight, and some have large props placed against the outside walls to prevent their toppling over, presenting often a very drunken appearance. When I first started building I noticed that the wall under construction was off the straight, so asked the mason to place a plumb-line against it ; but he informed me that Kashmiris did not use them, as they could build without troubling about such instruments. Europeans might need them, but Kashmiris' eyesight was good, and that was sufficient. I finally demonstrated to him that his eyes had failed him in this particular instance, and impressed this fact on his mind's eye by making him pull the whole of the wall down and rebuild it. I believe that I really did convert him to believe in plumb-lines, although it did not then happen to be one of the customs of the Kashmir masons. There are only a few buildings which attract your attention after leaving the Maharajah's palace and the large modern villa close by belonging to Raja Sir Hari Singh, the heir-apparent and nephew to H.H. the Maharajah.

One house, a strongly built, pretentious-looking edifice of stone and brick, is that of a late Governor of thirty years ago, in those days notable, as it was the only house in the city that possessed glass windows. I can never pass it without thinking of my first call on the great personage who then owned it. He kept me waiting for half-an-hour, no doubt to impress upon me his importance and my nothingness. However, that halfhour was not lost time, for his servant entertained me by showing to me the wonders of the state-room. He drew my attention to a glass chandelier which hung from the ceiling in the centre of

the room, and tried to make me understand the brilliant effect when the candles were lighted. Then he drew my attention to a valuable painting which the Governor had procured. It was no less than a German oleograph of the Thames at Pangbourne. The servant asked me to come to a certain spot in the room from where I could get the best view of this wonderful painting, he putting his hand to his forehead to shield the light from his eyes. I, of course, did the same, and was duly impressed. From there I was taken to the south wall, where hung a picture of Queen Victoria, Empress of India ; this I was asked to look at from another spot, and then, lo and behold! instead of the Empress of India, stood a black and white English terrier. The servant looked at me to enjoy my wonder and surprise at such a marvel. We had hardly finished all the wonders of the room when the great man himself entered.

Lower down the river on the opposite side is the Maharajah's temple, where the Dharam Sabha, or religious council, meet to discuss religious subjects, and to excommunicate those of their co-religionists who have broken their caste by eating food with someone not of their caste, or some heinous sin of that description. The temple itself is the ordinary square stone building with a dome-like spire covered with sheets of tin ; the inside is 10 X 10 feet, with a pedestal of stone in the centre on which stands the stone lingam known as the god Shiva. The worshippers bring their offerings of milk, sugar, rice and flowers, the priest being in attendance to take their money. This temple stands in a courtyard with a handsome stone stairway to the river, and above the stairway is a hall overlooking the river, where the Dharam Sabha hold their august meetings.

A little lower down the river on the same side and just above the third bridge, called Fateh Kadal, is the Church Mission School for girls, and a few yards lower down is the C.M.S. High School for boys. They are merchants' houses adapted to suit school needs. They overhang the river, and with their bal-

conies and lattice windows are decidedly picturesque. Sometimes will be seen boys jumping out of the school windows and off the roof into the river, distances varying from twenty to fifty feet in height. It is the only building in the city besides the palace which possesses a flag. It has to do duty for a school bell. The flag is a red one emblazoned with the school crest and motto. The crest is crossed paddles and the motto is "In all things be men," which is ever a call to the citizens as well as to the boys to wake up and "play the game," of which more anon.

On the opposite side of the river is a large handsome building, formerly the house of a previous Governor, which remained uninhabited many years on account of its being haunted.

Some eighteen years ago Mrs. Annie Besant, of Theosophist fame, took pity on the said building when she came to Kashmir on her crusade against the Mission School, and filled it with three hundred boys whom she spirited away from the Mission School with the help, not of Mahatmas, but with the aid of more corporeal beings in the shape of those Indian and Kashmiri officials who had become her followers for the time being, like the good old Vicar of Bray, until times did alter. Many interesting things happened in those days of war, and still more amusing articles appeared in the native Press in India, inspired by the good lady, about the Kashmir Mission School in general and Mr. Biscoe in particular. One spicy bit of news which I am told appeared in forty native papers in India is, I think, worth printing for the forty-first time.

It ran thus :

"Mr. Biscoe, a missionary in Kashmir, makes his Brahman boys drag dead dogs through the city."

Now this picturesque proceeding took our fancy, and we thought it ought to be immortalised, to show that one lie at

least was really true. It so happened that I possessed an English spaniel, Taffy by name, though he did not happen to be a Welshman and very seldom a thief. He was withal a very loyal dog, for he was ready to die for the Queen. The rest was quite easy. I took Taffy to the stables, which are somewhat dilapidated, and therefore would look like a house in the city, and would make an excellent background. The boys were ready with the rope. Taffy went dead for Mrs. Besant this time instead of the Queen ; the rope was tie to Taffy's hind leg, which the boys grasped, and a photographer very kindly did the rest. So there were immortalised the words of Mrs. Besant copied by forty papers in India, and who can say in what other countries this astounding news was not spread : "Mr. Biscoe, a missionary in Kashmir, makes his Brahman boys drag dead dogs through the city." One of the many untruths spread about the country of the mission schools was absolutely true, for who could deny it! The deed had been photographed, and that, too, before the days of laked cinema films were thought of. I should like to say that I think Mrs. Besant fully believed what was told here by her Kashmir and Indian friends, and had not then discovered their capacity for manufacturing lies. This fact, I think, is interesting as showing how some minds, and those clever ones, pick up untruths in their search for truth.

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CHAPTER 11

MODERN KASHMIR AND ITS PEOPLE

By
C.G. Bruce

The modern history of Kashmir dates from the extension of the British power to the Panjab, where the Sikh army had to be subdued.

Gulab Singh was a hill ruler of the Dogra country. He was born at Jammu, and was one of three warlike brothers who, between them, had conquered Ladakh and Baltisan and other districts. Gulab Singh, being a wise man, took the side of the British, and his reward was one altogether out of proportion to his services. He was presented with the kingdom of Kashmir on the payment of a nominal sum—and absurd sum for such a priceless possession.

The chief motive of the Government was to show their displeasure to the Sikhs, and they can never have realised what they were doing. However, Gulab Singh became the new ruler of Kashmir, and was succeeded by his heirs. He left the country in very nearly as bad a state as he found it, but his son was a humane man, and if only his officials had been as good as himself things would have gone better still. But they were grasping and tyrannical, and ground the people down to the last gasp.

The year 1877 was a cruel time. A bad season was added to excessive taxation, so that the people preferred leaving their crops to rot in the ground to gathering what would bring in so little profit to themselves. Villages were deserted, trade went down, and starvation decreased the population. It was only with the last Maharajah that a turning loomed in the long lane of Kashmir's misfortunes.

It is now a feudatory state of British India. Modern education and methods of commerce are being introduced, and the conditions are improving very rapidly, chiefly, it must be said, in consequence of the direct influence of the British.

The numbers of travellers who pour into the country every year during the summer months are doing a great service to Kashmir. They bring in money, and they encourage her trades in exchange for pleasure and health, but they do more. The breezy, sporting nature of the Sahib, the humanising influence of the ladies and children, the devoted ministry of the medical missionaries, are all silently teaching a good proportion of the people that whining and cringing and untruth are not the characteristics of true men, that endurance and energy are. They meet with honest dealing and kindness, and show that they have learnt to trust their visitors, for there is hardly a merchant who will not send his goods on approval, knowing nothing of his customers save that they are Sahibs.

The Maharajah is most courteous too, and has allowed camping and building to a very large extent in and about his capital, Srinagar (the City of the Sun), as well as in the valley and up at Gulmarg, which is built on either side of the river Jhelum, and has a native population of about 120,000. The population of Kashmir itself is some 3,000,000.

Srinagar reminds one of a large Swiss village with its chalet-like houses and mountainous background. It also recalls

parts of Venice and of the river Thames. A strange mixture, and lacking, of course, in the civilisation of all these places.

The whole picture is fascinating and the frame is grand. There are seven wooden bridges spanning the river, which, like Venice, counts the water as its chief street. It is alive with various river craft, plying busily up and down, and even a steam-launch or two. The houses are built of wood and sun-dried bricks, and look very shaky, but seem to withstand the constant slight shocks of earthquake better than more solidly built ones.

The site of the old city was a far healthier one. The continual drainage from this town into the river, and its low marshy banks, make it very unhealthy during some months of the year. But the temptation to build a city on a river is always a great one, the advantages are so numerous, and it gains in beauty what it loses in health.

Part of the charm of Srinagar lies in its variety. There are Hindu temples, Mohamedan mosques, tall-storied, balconied houses and shops, with carved lattice windows and doors. Bright touches of colour in the spring are given by the vines and tulips, which grow everywhere, and also by the groups of women at their washing down by the river, for some of them wear lovely colours.

The view of Srinagar and the country all round which we get from the temple-crowned hill, Takt-i-Suleiman, is unique. The city itself, with its brown wooden roofs, looks like a large ant-hill; the flat meadow-land and rice-fields, spread out like the squares of a chess-board, are intersected by streams and river winding about like silver ribbons, and the poplar avenues stretch in long green lines. Farther off the lakes gleam bright, and reflect the mountains in sapphire and crystal.

And what of the people of this delightful country? I am afraid we have seen that the natural untrained Kashmiri was not a strong character. Endurance and patience—the chief virtues one might imagine all their hardships to have produced in them—are even lacking. One of the everyday sights is a great big man sobbing like a noisy child, and a whining and cringing manner is far too common. Even when they bear pain or trouble it is not bravely borne. They are very lazy, too, and very dirty. What was good enough for their fathers, they say, is good enough for them.

On the other hand, they are not aggressive, and are happy in their family life. They can hardly be called truthful, although they have fluent tongues, and can make the best of a bad case. Still, they are improving, and a great factor in this direction is the excellent school for boys under Mr. Tyndall Biscoe, who teaches them to be manly as well as giving them book learning, and their water feats show that some of the rising generation will be ashamed of crying.

But the people of Kashmir are not all of the same stock. As we know, the ruler we brought in was a Hindu, while a country-people were Mohamedan. So we get some distinct types, all of whom are now under the Maharajah's rule.

The Sikhs and Dogras are the governing classes, who live chiefly in and about the winter capital of Jammu. The Pundits, or original Hindus, very light in colour, with Aryan features—that is, similar to the people of Europe—are townfolk and clerks. It is their women-folk who wear the lovely purple, green, and red garments, and so we can always pick them out in a group of women, for the Mahomedans wear a long, loose brown woollen frock, cut like a long skirt, with wide sleeves rolled back. The peasants and farmers are all Mahomedans, though some of them elect to be merchants. And all these different people are under one rule, though allowed to follow

their two separate religions with the same tolerance as our various sects and churches.

Of course, in sketching the character of the average Kashmiri villager, we do not underrate those who have, by modern education, raised themselves in many ways. Their nobles and gentry have a dignified bearing and an appearance of culture which show them to be superior, and some of the Mullahs or priests are men of learning. The people are fine physically, and the men can carry, if they like, very heavy loads.

The boatmen, again, are quite a separate class of tribe, numbering about 34,000. They are called Hangis, and proudly declare they are the descendants of Noah. Certainly their boats of gabled roof and flat bottom are not unlike the famous Noah's ark of our young days. The boatmen, too, have their class distinctions. For instance, the floating-garden cultivators, and those who reap and transport in their barges the harvest of the lake—the waternut—are superior to the other bargee folk. The passenger boatmen are lower still, and, lowest of all, the fishermen.

Kashmir has its gipsies too, and this wonderful tribe has many points of likeness, whether wandering in the East or the West. They go in for leather work, as it is their business to skin dead cattle and tan the hides. There are also shepherd tribes, but they are nomadic, and are not Kashmiris. Their one idea in life is the well-being of their flocks and herds; wherever pasture is good, thither lies their path. They sell their milk, butter, and wool to the middlemen who retail it.

One characteristic draws us very closely into sympathy with the country-people. They tend the graves of their departed relatives and friends with respect, and plant iris and narcissus all over them. The sweeps of colour one sees in the spring are more often than not the cometeries, though they are very seldom enclosed by walls.

The children are dear but dirty little people. Still, they seem to have a good time, and enjoy a free life, with every chance to paddle as much as they like, and that means a great deal to children. They are fond of games, and play hop-scotch and tip-cat. In Srinagar they are even learning cricket. Little girls love their rag dolls, and have little toy palanquins for them, and they will act the principal events of their simple life in "make believe," just as English children do.

The people, as a whole, appreciate play-acting, and there are troupes of travelling players who go from village to village. Their power of mimicry and "get up" is excellent.

Kashmiris are great gossips, and love handing on tit-bits of news, which, of course, lose nothing in the telling. The wilder the rumour the more to their taste. They have their wandering minstrels too, but unfortunately, for the sake of history or romance, they usually sing on ode to the praise of the most important person present—again one of the results of their old days under tyranny, when to please and flatter those in power was their first thought. The Kashmiri has always an eye for the main chance.

There are elaborate customs connected with the chief events of their lives—birth, marriage, and death—and very expensive their customs are.

We know that charity begins at home, and here let us say a good word for the Kashmiri. He appears to best advantage in his home life. The women are great homekeepers, and are devoted to their husbands and large families. The wife is by no means a drudge or chattel, but the equal of her husband. Indeed, he often stands in a awe of her, and if he is prone to weep, she can bandy words with another lady in a manner sufficiently interesting to hold the close attention and interest of the respective husbands. When these wordy battles are waged between the boatwomen, who apparently have the largest

powers of abusive language, they will stand on the prows of their boats and quarrel till sunset; and if the matter is still undecided, a basket overturned on the boat floor signifies that the fight will be resumed on the next opportunity. Aunts, on both sides of the family, are very important people in Kashmiri, as aunts are often apt to be the world over.

The staple food of the Kashmiri is rice ; and the flat field surrounding the lakes for miles are excellent for its cultivation, for rice has to be irrigated while it is growing, and the natives wade about in these little terraces of muddy water dibbling in the young rice plants from the seedling bed, where it stands in thick emerald green.

Other food stuffs are barley, wheat, water-nuts, and wal-nuts ground into flour ; milk, fruit, and eggs are also abundant, as well as vegetables. Probably no better natural food stores exist than in Kashmir. The climate is what we describe as temperate, never too hot except in the lowest part of the valley, and never too cold in inhabited parts. The Gujars of grazers move out to huts in the hills during the hot weather, for the sake of good pasture for their beasts, and wind their way down to the plains for the same purpose in the winter months.

Srinagar enjoys what we should call a good English winter. Frost or snow, sleet and rain, play the changes, but the blessings of these when exercised in moderation can only be appreciated by people who have experienced a climate which is only cool for two months in the year. But severe winters can make the life of the people very hard. Their houses are not built to resist either excess in heat or cold. There is no glass to the windows. In the summer, their pretty open lattice lets in flies, and in the winter, though they seal them over with paper, that is not enough to keep out the bitter frost. Every Kashmiri, man, woman, and child, possesses, however, a little wicker-covered earthenware pot, shaped like a round basket. Into this they put hot embers or charcoal, and then crouch over it. At night they

may even sleep with these Kangris in their bosoms, and severe burns and sores are constant results.

Some of the old sages of Kashmiri declare that the winters are now not so severe as in their young days. We hear such remarks on many subjects from venerable friends in our own country, and they would seem to be right. We seldom nowadays hear of the Thames being frozen over, of four-in-hands being driven across it, or of the vicar at the head of his people marching over from one bank to the other. Perhaps the climate in Kashmir is becoming milder, but the winters are still quite severe enough for windows without glass.

The people of Srinagar have other foes to fight besides cold winters, and the greater because they will not try to conquer them. They will try to keep themselves warm, but they will not attempt to keep themselves clean. The dirt and insanitary condition of the city is so bad that when any sickness comes it finds open arms of welcome.

Cholera is the great terror of the Kashmiris, and yet they will do nothing to avoid or prevent its spread. They drink the dirty river water into which the drains of the city fall, and where they wash their dirty clothes. They eat overripe fruit rotting in the sun and fly-blown. Worst of all, they resent any attempt to improve their ways.

Now and then a fire, caused most likely by an overtuned kangri, will sweep through streets of the city, and one would imagine that good might in these cases come out of evil. But the houses are built up again in the same way, narrow and poky, and dirt once more reigns supreme.

Other foes, which not only Kashmir but other countries have to endure, are visitations by earthquake, flood, and famine. These convulsions of our earth, which still distress mankind, are felt all along the Himalayas, which are called

"young," geologically speaking. Kashmir has often suffered from these terrifying shocks, and the ruined condition of the temples is no doubt partly due to damage by earthquake. Famine and flood are more possible to fight, as provision should be made in case of bad seasons, and flood should be more intelligently guarded against, though it cannot be entirely prevented.

There is one very bad system in the administration of Kashmir. The people of the city are held to be first importance. The peasants must provide for them, and may then profit by the remainder of their crops. Grain is bought by the State at a price which partly pays the farmer, and is sold again at cheaper rates to the townsfolk, who now look on themselves as favoured mortals and expect this and other favours as their right, not the least ashamed of their pauperism. They are certainly not as comfortably housed as the agricultural people, who, in their cottages surrounded by orchard and garden, and with ample space instead of being crowded together, have at first sight much the best of it.

But in hard years the peasants suffer by comparison with the city folk. Perhaps the general progressive trend of government will recognise this evil, and insist on good living wages and encourage thrift and self-respect.

The language of Kashmir is quite distinct from that of India. It is chiefly composed of words from the Sanskrit, a good many Persian, a few Arabic and Panjabi, and also a few Urdu, the camp language of India. Ordinary travellers like ourselves, who only know the latter very indifferently, will do well to take an interpreter with them into the valleys where they intend to march and camp. The pony-men as a rule act as interpreters, but they are also usually great rascals. The country-folk speak Kashmiri only, though, of course, merchants and the head-men of villages are able to understand Urdu. The edu-

cated classes know Persian as well as these other languages, and English is now being taught in the city schools.

(1915)

CHAPTER 12

EVE IN ASIATIC EDEN

By
S.N. Dhar

The long-fabled beauty of women of Kashmir has been acclaimed by both Eastern and Western poets and other observant visitors who have placed her as the best type of oriental womanhood due to her suppleness, attractiveness and charm.

EVE OF EDEN

"The eyes of a beautiful Kashmiri woman have such an urgency mingled with pathos, that you look into them as you would look into spring waters, wondering." Thus does James Milne wax eloquent over the expressive eyes of a Kashmiri woman, whom he calls "a primal creature of her Garden of Eden". Indeed she is one of the beautiful specimens of the delicate femininity of India. Generally large, lustrous and almond-shaped, the eyes of the Eve of Eden of Asia gather great charm, when her eyelashes are bathed with collyrium and antimony and stone and other trinkets and silver ear-rings heighten the effect.

FEATURES AND COMPLEXION

Sir Francis Younghusband assures the visitor that "he will often see strikingly handsome women, with clear-cut features, large dark eyes, with marked eye-brows and general Jewish appearance". Their Jewish features belie the theories of Kashmiris being the descendants of the Lost Tribe of Israel.

Kashmiri women have "an English rosiness of complexion behind the Eastern tan". This original blend of the East and the West in the person of "Eve in a Kashmir Eden" has fitly won poetical tribute from many an observant traveller, who marks the Greek profile of the face and reflectively remembers that Alexander and his victorious armies passed through the Eden of Asia and left many of his soldiers to settle in the land of beauties, natural and human. George Forster, who visited Kashmir in 1783, matched Kashmiri women with "brunettes in the South of France" in their complexion and beauty. Col. Dow found them "enchantly beautiful".

The majority of women in Kashmir, the peasant women, due to their hard occupation in farm and field, have a sunburnt complexion that has quite lost the attractive rosy hue which adorns it in early youth. Her complexion presents a strong contrast to that of the white complexion of the co-called Kashmiri Panditani and the Muslim woman of the middle class. But her fine white teeth, her graceful form and her delicate features, more than make up the loss in her complexion.

"Hindu women often have refined faces and gentle manners and they are fairer than the Mohammedan", so writes Dr. Neve about Kashmiri Panditains. That is so because they lead indoor lives but their health level is very much lower than that of their Muslim sisters.

BOATWOMAN OF THE JHELUM

Hanjis, the boat-folk of Kashmir, are Muslim but their life and manners are strangely different from their community. May be they have gypsy streaks in their blood, or that they have Noah as their ancestor, on the pattern of whose legendary Ark their boats are designed. Boatmen and their women possess distinctive characteristics.

James Milne has also remarked the "handsome appearance and the picturesque air," of the boatwoman who ferries you across the Jhelum and into the lovely Dal Lake, bordered by the well-known Moghul Gardens. Her smart, easy movements and alert mien, when she sits at the helm of the Doonga or houseboat, attracts the notice of visitors who admire her excellent physique. She is also smart in her wordy, harmless and noisy battle with other boatwomen. These high-pitched conversational feats, wherein powers of high flown abusive language are very well demonstrated, last for hours and are sometimes adjourned from day to day. Of course, like every Kashmiri woman, she is a great gossip—a hobby that trains her tongue in fluency and sharpness.

The boatwoman's head dress of red cloth, overhanging with a pinscarf, covering the plaits on the back, does not fail to command notice. It offers a sharp contrast to her white complexion—obviously the gift of an open-air life in the boat wherein the sun does not tan her complexion and the cool breeze heightens the ruddy colour of her cheeks.

OTHER OCCUPATIONS

Besides being farmers and boatwomen, the women of Kashmir carry on many other occupations. They are the milk women, fair-complexioned, erect and healthy, wearing stone and silver necklaces. It delights you to see her balancing her big earthen milk pots or spacious baskets, containing cowdung, on her head. Women help their husbands in raising vegetables. Early morning they come to the city and town, skilfully balancing big baskets of vegetables on their heads.

Gujars, the migratory herdsmen of Kashmir, are a race by themselves. They are tall, fair and have Aryan features. Their women are very beautiful, graceful and smart. The nomadic, active life that they lead gives them a ruddy complexion. Black or blue overalls, large silver ear-rings and stone or bead necklaces

become them very well. They are experts at handling their huge flocks of sheep and cattle. It is interesting to watch them settling up and managing their modest encampments on high altitudes. Their gypsy life is picturesque.

It is also interesting to watch village women pounding paddy in spacious wooden mortars with big pestles. One woman straightens herself and lifts the pestle high to bring it down with a crash in the mortar which contains paddy. Then she lifts it up, while the other woman facing her, throws her pestle in the mortar similarly. This occupation gives them healthy exercise. She does the fetching of water from the nearby source of water.

At most of their occupations, Kashmiri women sing chorus folksongs. But the drudgery of these occupations, to which they are per necessity driven from very early childhood, coupled with early childbearing, damages their looks prematurely.

DRESS

Formerly both Hindu and Muslim ladies of the middle class used to live in purdah. Now Hindu ladies in Kashmir proper have competely dropped the use of purdah. Some of their sisters in Jammu, however, still use it. Kashmiri Muslim ladies of the middle class mostly still live in purdah, so that lead cloistered lives.

The Kashmiri Panditain wears the gaudy pheran, the ample Kashmiri gown, hemmed with a border and hanging in awkward folds. She has, as an offshoot of Hindu Reform movements, taken to the Indian type of dress in order to align herself with the progressive women of her country. The picturesque pheran is not going out of use with the Muslim women. These pherans are, as Mrs. Freda Bedi remarked last year in the presence of the writer, "just devices invented by the exploiting and jealous male to disguise the beauty of the Kashmiri

woman". They serve—as the writer commented in the December 1944 issue of the Northern India Observer—that unaesthetic purpose eminently well!

The head-dress that the Muslim women wear is peculiar. The *kasaba*, as it is called, is a turban-like, red head-dress, held tight with pins to which is fastened a bonnet of cotton print or embroidered cloth, that covers the pendant tresses. It is worn by Muslim women after marriage. Such of the Panditains, who still wear the picturesque *pheran*, continue the head-dress, *targanga*, that goes with it. Unlike, the *kasaba*, it is white and only a few pins are used to keep it in place. The pendant bonnet used over it falls to the heels.

Unmarried girls wear skull caps which are sometimes worked with lace. Peasant girls and women have their hair spread over the forehead and sides in a large number of skilfully woven plaits, which are tied into a knot and covered by a course tassel on the back. Large silver or metal ear-rings and necklaces besmear their skin near the ears. Silver bracelets and glassy bangles make a jingling sound when she scours the utensils by the riverside or carries water from there. Home-made grass shoes are much in use. She wears leather sandals, if she can afford them.

HER FUTURE

Mrs. Bruce strikes the nail on the head when she says, "The women are great homekeepers and are devoted to their husbands and large families. The wife is, by no means, a drudge or chattel, but the equal of her husband".

Kashmiri women are not clean in their personal habits. They know and observe ever so little of sanitation and hygienic living habits. perhaps the climate is partly responsible for that. Her deplorable ignorance and appalling illiteracy are responsible for the faulty upbringing of her children who soon lose

their "winsome looks". A great change is afoot already. Women in Kashmir are leaning to be hygienic and progressive. The spread of female education is steadily evolving the enlightened type of woman, who rallies under such organisations as Woman's Welfare Trust and local branch of All-India Women's Conference, presided over by Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru, who tries her best to better the lot of her less fortunate sisters.

(1945)

CHAPTER 13

BRAHMANS AND SADHUS

By

C.E. Tyndale Biscoe

When a Brahman takes up work as a clerk in the State service, which is the ambition of most of them, he dresses very much like the babu of India—he dons tight-fitting trousers. If he is able to dress in the height of fashion the legs of his trousers will be a foot or more longer than his legs, and have to dispose of themselves in many folds and creases at his ankles. Moreover the trousers must fit round the legs like a glove; so tight must they be that the only way to get them to pass the heel is by means of a highly glazed piece of paper, a shoe-horn being too thick and clumsy for the operation. Instead of a pheron he wears a coat and waistcoat, which are generally of black alpaca; below the waistcoat he puts on a cotton shirt, which is worn outside and not inside the trousers, as is the fashion in the West. This custom is important, for by wearing the shirt outside he always has a towel and pocket-handkerchief at hand. Although he adopts a Western shirt, he very seldom runs to a collar and tie; if he has taken to a collar he generally forgets to send it to the wash. He usually wears the Eastern shoe with socks, but nowadays patent-leather shoes have come into fashion, but he usually forgets to lace them. Although this kit strikes one as a great mix-up of the East and West, yet it is infinitely preferable to the unsightly and unmanly garb of the pheron. Where the Eastern has the better of the Western in dress is his headgear, which, as I said before, is an becoming as it is serviceable.

When the Brahman clerk goes to his house in the evening he casts off his day dress and goes back to the dress of his forefathers, for in that kit alone can he really feel at home.

The manner of the Brahman putting on and taking off his garments is a true picture of his inside. When he is in his home he is an out-and-out Easterner in manner, customs and beliefs, but when he is in his office you might think by his talk that he had taken on Western ideas and beliefs, but it is not so, they mean nothing more to him than does his babu dress.

I have often marvelled at their powers of acting, for they are great, and in their power to keep it up.

Many a time and oft have I seen my fellow-countrymen taken in by their consummate acting and patience in order to gain their ends, and have likewise been duped myself. They are great readers of character, and find out your strong or weak points very quickly. They are past masters in the art of flattery. I have seen many Europeans fall before it, and through flattering become the personal confidants of their masters, to the detriment of any honest men in their department. In all my time in Kashmir nothing has distressed me more than to see my fellow-countrymen done down by these clever flatterers, for over and over again have I seen in consequence of it the honest men go under and the scoundrels flourishing. I can say further that I have seen honest men utterly beggared, and I know of several scoundrels now rejoicing in their riches who ought to be in gaol.

Many years ago at a ruridecanal meeting in London we were discussing how best to deal with that class of sharper who trades on religion in order to procure charity out of the tender-hearted, and giving our experiences how we ourselves had been taken in by them. When a certain padre stood up and told the house that as for himself he had always proved to be a match for them and had never been taken in, this statement

was received with a roar of laughter, as this particular man was known to be as easy prey to the cadger, simply because he thought himself infallible. I fear we only hurt the feelings of this padre and were unable to shake the faith that was in him. It is a misfortune for anyone in English to believe himself to be a cadger-proof, but it is absolutely disastrous for those in authority in India to consider themselves proof against flatterers and intriguers, for it leads to so much unnecessary suffering and injustice.

I will give an instance of a simple case when I was not taken in.

A Brahman holy man, generally known as a Sadhu, visited me one morning, saying that he was interested in Christianity, and that he had heard what a wonderfully godly man I was, etc. etc., and would I give him a Holy Bible so that he might study it himself, and also asked me to appoint a time when he might come and study it with me. He was a curious object to look at : he was tall and thin, with long, tapering fingers, and long nails ; the hair on his face, which was red, stuck out at a right angle, which gave the impression that one was looking at the sun in all its glory with red rays shooting forth, or it might be a halo around this saint's head. I did not rise to the Sadhu's pious request, as I felt that he had something much nearer his heart than the Bible. He seeing that I was not in a suitable religious mood asked leave to go. He came again some days after, and finding me in a mood that he thought more in tune with the thoughts in his own heart, after a short preface of flattery he came wonderfully quickly to the point, which was this: Would I grant his son a scholarship if he sent him to the Mission School? I asked him why he thought that I should give his son a scholarship.

"Because," said he, "I am a holy man, and worship God all day long under a chenar-tree, and therefore cannot support my family."

"But," I said, "surely if you are a holy man and worship God your first duty would be to take care of your wife and family."

"No," said he, "for I have renounced them all, and spend my days sitting under a chenar-tree thinking of God."

I answered that I could be no party to such a life, for a husband's and father's first duty must be to his wife and family. But he failed to see my point of view and pressed for the scholarship. So, to cut the story short, we came to a practical agreement. I promised to give his son a scholarship if he on his part would give up wasting his whole day sitting under a tree and would instead get to work and earn a livelihood for himself and family.

He would not close with this offer, so we parted. About a year after this interview a tall, thin gentleman with a clean-shaven face, dressed in the ordinary babu's dress, with his shirt outside his trousers, and I think he had patent-leather shoes with laces untied, came up to me with a broad grin and held out his hand for me to shake. I racked my brain to think who my visitor could possibly be ; that he knew me was evident from his broad grin; but it was not until I had grasped that tapering, muscleless hand that I tumbled to it. It was my scholarship-wanting friend, the holy Sadhu, but the red halo had departed. He was but a common or garden clerk in State service who stood before me. He had fulfilled his part of the bargain : he had given up a Sadhu's life for pen-driving and was receiving a monthly salary whereby he could support his family. So the bargain was clenched. His son came to school as a scholar and proved himself to be an exceptionally intelligent youth ; from school he passed on to the college, and now is in the police and supports his mother, as my friend the Sadhu has passed to the greater life, into the Beyond.

Talking of Sadhus, every summer about the month of July the Sadhus swarm in from India, and pass through Srinagar on their way to the sacred cave of Amar Nath, the Lord of Life, which is situated in a mountain about six marches from Srinagar at a height of 13,000 feet. They arrive in their hundreds, a noisy lot of yellow-and-orange-robed or naked fellows, smeared with ashes. In the city one sees them marching in parties of ten or more, blowing their conch shells and waving bright red iron tridents, and holding out their brass bowls for alms. Crowding into the country as they do, they sometimes bring cholera with them and start an epidemic causing thousands of deaths. On one occasion when they had brought in cholera Dr. Neve spoke to one on this subject, and he answered : "All men have to die some time or other. I die, you die, we all die, so what does it matter?" I have watched them often in cholera epidemics, when everyone is scared, and is in need of hearing and comforting. These naked, holy fellows march in parties of a dozen or so, in single file, shouting, stamping their feet in time as they go from house to house, collecting alms, telling the women that they will die if they do not pay up properly. Their appearance is enough to frighten the women, for they have long matted hair, and their faces and bodies are smeared with ashes, and very often they are drunk with bang or opium. The Hindus give them great reverence, for they are afraid of their curses. It is not only the ignorant people, but the educated Hindus also, who give the Sadhus great reverence. Much money is spent by rajas and others on them. An Indian gentleman speaking at a meeting for the C.O.S. said that £13,000,000 is spent on them annually.

I was returning one night from a Hindu reform club meeting with an educated Hindu who had been delivering himself on his ideas on temperance, and he asked me if I knew a certain holy man named Ram Chand. He was somewhat shocked at my ignorance when I said that I had never heard of his holiness, "For," said he, "this man is a very holy man, and I always go to him for advice." I asked him in what ways Ram Chand

showed his holiness; did he help the poor or relieve widows in their distress? "Oh no," he said, "he does not do anything, for he is very holy man." Again I asked : "How do you know that he is such a holy man?" "Why," said he, "he can hold his breath for three minutes." My companion then looked at me hard to see how I took this astounding news, this marvellous proof of holiness. I fear I am very mundane, so I could not work up any enthusiasm over it. Now it might have been different if he had told me that his holy man could swim under water for three minutes and make some use of his power of not breathing by saving the life of drowning persons, but I suppose if he did that no one would go to him for advice, and no rupees would come his way.

I fear the Sadhus that I have seen have not impressed me with the idea of holiness ; no, not even when I have seen them lying on their beds of spikes, or those who have kept their fists closed and allowed their finger-nails to grow through their hands, or any of their many self-inflicted tortures. There is no doubt that there are some really holy men amongst them, but they are crowded out by the baser sort. I should like to mention one who showed himself to be an honest man and a sportsman.

A certain yellow-robed and much-travelled Sadhu visited Kashmir with his cheelas. He had travelled in Europe and America, and was highly educated. At the time of his visit a certain section of the Brahman community were very anxious to obtain his aid in establishing a Brahman school, so they asked him to attend a public meeting at their big temple so that he might add his weight to the scheme. During the proceedings the President made some false statements concerning the Mission School, which the Sadhu accepted as true, and therefore spoke against the Mission School.

Our headmaster having heard this went to see him, and invited him to the Mission School in order that he might see for himself. He accepted the invitation and brought with him one

of his cheelas who had been a student in the Mission School. He became greatly interested in all he saw and heard, with the result that he called a meeting of the Brahmans in the temple and delivered a lecture on the methods of the teaching given in the Mission School, backing it up by giving his experiences of the schools in the West. He then advised all parents to send their boys to the Mission School instead of establishing a brahman school, and finally called upon the President to withdraw his words uttered at the last public meeting and to apologise.

I give the case of a Sadhu acting in a gallant manner. It was told to me first-hand by an old lady. It happened at the commencement of the Indian Mutiny in May 1857. She was then a girl of seventeen, and was with a party of eight others who had managed to escape out of Delhi and were trying to reach Meerut. They had been in hiding all day and were commencing their march about sundown, and in keeping away from the main roads they came upon a Sadhu in the jungle. This man, seeing their distress, for they had been on the tramp for seven days, took pity on them and refreshed them with what food he had. They had not been with him long when a party of the mutineers' cavalry discovered them, rode up and commanded the Sadhu to give up his visitors, which he refused to do, so the mutineers said that they would take them without his leave. The Sadhu had put his visitors in his hut and sanctuary, and dared the soldiers to enter under the penalty of dire punishment which would follow his curses. The mutineers feared to disobey the Sadhu, so the party of British fugitives were saved. The old lady told me that in gratitude to that gallant Sadhu she always had a warm corner in her heart for this class of holy men, and never refused alms to those who asked help from her.

Most of the Sadhus that we see in Kashmir are those who come from India in the summer-time, whereas the Kashmiri Sadhus generally sit under a tree, or some spot considered to be holy, and are visited by their devotees, to whom they give ghostly advice. Schoolboys visit them before going in for public

examinations to seek their aid in passing. To some they promise success for so much money paid in advance ; to others they promise success if they will walk round some sacred spot a certain number of times to visit the goddess of learning at her shrine, which is some ten miles from Srinagar. You can see quite a number of students turning their feet that way. As a matter of fact, it is really good advice, as the examinees read their books continually all day and through a great part of the night. In order to keep themselves awake they tie their top-knots to a nail in the wall, so that their nodding heads may be kept in order. So the advice to go on a twenty-mile walk is really excellent, though the Sadhus are not aware of their wisdom in that respect.

One boy was absolutely worn out before the examination, as the Sadhu had ordered him to walk round the Hari Parbat hill three times during the night. The journey in the day-time would not be of any benefit to him ; it must be every night for seven nights in succession. He was in consequence ploughed and very miserable, for, as he said, he had paid the Sadhu many rupees, which the Sadhu would not return.

The faith that these people have in their holy men is astonishing, considering the number of times they are fooled and swindled by them. We will now leave the holy men sitting under trees and thinking of God and return for a last look at the people in the bazaars. Hitherto I have spoken chiefly of the men, because it is chiefly men that you meet in the bazaars. The upperclass women never leave their houses except after dark, with the exception of the few who for certain urgent reasons are obliged to leave their houses, when they will wear a "burka". It is white cotton cape which reaches from the top of the head to the feet. There is a sort of trellis window, about four inches square, made of coloured cord, through which they see the world. Women whose business in the street prevents their covering themselves up in this way will, when you pass, cover their faces with the shawl that every woman has on her

head, and will generally turn their faces to the wall. They have been taught always to get out of the way to make room for men. It is of continual interest to me to read the character of the men in this matter. Few men will make way for a woman, but will always make room for the swaggering Brahmani bull and the cow, and more often than not for the pariah dog, for the former have horns and the latter sharp teeth. The man with the proud look and high stomach carries all before him, until he meets a man who has a higher stomach than his own or the Brahmani bull.

A friend of mine, a subaltern of small stature, was crossing one of the bridges, keeping the centre of the road. An Afghan who was of great stature was also crossing the bridge in the opposite direction ; he also had chosen the centre of the road. Neither of them would give way to the other, so their bodies met. Before the subaltern could wink he found himself under the great arm of the Afghan, who continued his triumphant march down the centre of the bridge, carrying the subaltern's legs to the fore and head to the stern, until he reached the end of the bridge, and then deposited him right side up in the street. What did the subaltern do next? is the natural question. Well, he did the only thing to be done under the circumstance, considering their relative sizes and strength : he took it in good part, as if he had quite enjoyed his ride.

Srinagar is an interesting city from a human point of view. I enjoy the people and their humour, as I hate the filth and stench of their streets.

There is hope for improvement, as of late there have come into the municipality some keen and intelligent citizens who want to get a move on, and are backing up the President in his arduous duties in fighting prejudice, custom and dishonesty ; but at present it is like driving a coach and four with brakes on all four wheels and only one of the four horses wishing to pull.

This is better than it used to be, for then the driver himself did not wish the coach to move. So we live in hope.

(1922)

CHAPTER 14

HINDU CUSTOMS

By

C.E. Tyndale Biscoe

A few weeks before delivery the woman with child is sent to the husband's house with a few pots full of curd, which is distributed among the husband's relatives. The woman is given new clothes by her father on this occasion.

On the sixth day after delivery the patient has a warm bath, the water being mixed with certain drugs having medicinal quality, and her mother's relatives pay her visits.

During the first eleven days the visitors are not allowed to eat or drink in the house, with the exception of the very near relatives, as the house is considered infections and unclean. On the eleventh day the patient puts on new clothes, made for her by her husband. The new born babe is given its name and a ceremony is performed. The priest brings his horoscope and receives a good tip if it is a male child. The horoscope is a scroll of paper showing the planets that are favourable or unfavourable to the baby.

The oldest woman of the household procures a few pieces of birch bark. She rolls them up and then assembles the family together. The pieces are then burnt, and the burning pieces are revolved several times round the head of each member in turn, while the old lady keeps on reciting the verse : "This is a good omen, may it recure."

For the shaving of the head of the child no definite time is fixed. The relatives are invited to a feast. The family priest also receives his dues. New clothes are made for the mother, the child and the nearest relatives. Even the barber receives his share.

The Thread Ceremony. Some days, not exceeding two weeks, before the day fixed for the ceremony the whole house is cleaned and white-washed. It is called Gher-Navii. After this ceremony the woman goes round to invite their relatives and receive money as a good omen. They hold regular nightly concerts, sometimes lasting for the whole night.

Henna Ceremony—This takes place two days before the thread ceremony. On this day the hands of the boy and his women relatives are dyed red. The aunt receives a tip for performing the office.

One day before the chief ceremony of the Holy Thread the male relatives, neighbours and friends are invited ; each man pays the host an eight-anna piece or a rupee as a good omen. On this occasion, generally, a lamb is sacrificed to the gods.

On this day women sing day and night without stopping. Generally they divide themselves into parties and sing by turns. They are given sumptuous feasts. The whole arrangement is in the hands of women. The aunt plays the most important part during the day. An altar is erected the priests chant vedas, and incense is burnt regularly. At nightfall the boy is taken to the river bank to perform certain ceremonies. While he is away, his mother, aunt and other female relatives dance in a circle in the compound, for each revolution the female spectators have to pay one pice or more according to their financial conditions. In this way the twice-born receives his second birth. This ceremony is usually performed before year of the boy's age.

Marriages are arranged by middlemen, who are first class liars. The house is white-washed, as in the case of the thread ceremony. This also is divided into three chief days —henna ceremony and devagun and the wedding ceremony. Women do the work, as in the former ceremony. The chief day is called lugan (marriage). The wedding procession goes to the bride's house. Again an altar is erected, and incense is kept burning. The priests chant vedas. The husband and the wife are made to swear to hold each other as one body and one soul. Through mantras their bodies and souls are united. They are never to separate, neither in this world nor in the next. The woman is called urdangi (half body—left side of the man). After the marriage is over the wedding-party is given a feast, vegetable food only being served ; then they leave the house with the bride. When they reach the bridegroom's house the doors are closed against them by the bride's father. The bridegroom are summoned by the bride's father. The bridegroom is given some rupees, and then the married couple are sent back on the same night. The bride spends a few days, not exceeding a week, in her husband's house, and then returns to her father and spends some time there also. Every time the father wishes to see his daughter he has to pay some cash.

If both the bride and the bridegroom are of adult age they live as husband and wife, if not, the bride wears a gold-embroidered cap and sleeps in a separate room till they attain majority. On that occasion another ceremony is performed, without the priest. This is called "zuge," or marriage proper. On this occasion also the bride's father has to invite his son-in-law to his house and spend a good deal of money on feasts.

Till the death of the husband's parents the couple are not allowed to speak in public with each other, or at least till they have children.

The wife has to obey implicitly the behests of her mother-in-law or her sister-in-law, if the latter happens to be older than

her husband. She has to rise early, and in case of poverty clean the house, fetch water, cook food and to sundry other things. Wives are, generally speaking, affectionate and devoted to their husbands.

Children are generally subservient to the will of their elders. But Western education has not left the child-world without the touch of its magic wand. They too want to be freer; and as most of their parents are ignorant it has been rendered difficult for them to control their children.

The ceremonies performed at the time of death of a Hindu are as follows:— The body is washed with warm water and wrapped in a piece of new cloth. A little ceremony is performed outside the house. The son or the brother or the nearest relative has to attend this ceremony. When it is over the body is placed on a plank and carried to the cremating ground. The men that accompany it continue chanting : "Sheo, Sheo Shamboo," etc. ("O god of Peace, forgive our sins"). After the body is removed the priest covers a small piece of ground inside the house with flour and places a basket over it with a lamp kept burning inside. He pretends to discover what body the soul has been changed into by reading the impression made on the flour. The body is then burnt in a peculiar way. The men come back, wash themselves in the river, burn a little fire on the river bank, turn round it seven times and then go to their houses. On the third day the son of the deceased visits the ashes of his father and brings a few bones, called "flowers," which are kept in the house till they are thrown into the Ganges, or a lake at Gangabal which is supposed to possess the same merit as the Ganges (Ganga = Ganges).

When the body of a deceased Hindu is carried to the cremating ground it is laid down in a corner, while certain elaborate ceremonies are performed, which may be very briefly stated here.

First three separate sites are selected, on which lamps called kulushas are placed. At this place eight Barous are invoked and propitiated through different mantras. These Barous are the attendants of the god Rudra, the master of death. Chit Shakti, the all-permeating vital force of the the universe, forms the ninth Barou. Apart from this, two fires are burnt ; the one is called "Vedic" and the other "Shavic Agni Sadhan." In these fires libations are offered to all gods and the Nirvana (absolute calm) of the deceased worked out.

Then a separate site is chosen at some distance from these fires. It is white-washed, and on it the plan of an altar is drawn. This place is enclosed with coloured threads fastened to pegs fixed in the four corners of the place. Within this enclosed area lamps are kept burning, and through the efficiency of the mantras the departed souls of the ancestors are invoked. Then a funeral pyre is constructed ; the body is placed on it with its head towards the south, because it is believed that Petra-Loka, the abode of ancestors, lies in that direction.

The eldest son or the nearest relative sets fire to the pile of wood. It is believed that till then the ghost of the deceased hovers round his mortal remains and mourns for those whom he has left behind. To rouse dispassion in him, the son to whom he was greatly attached in this world is asked to set fire to his deceased father's body. When the body is reduced to ashes the mourners leave the place and return home.

If the deceased be an old person, professional mourners, like those in Persia, are employed. The mourners are generally women. Early in the morning, while the male relative (especially the eldest son) are engaged in performing religious ceremonies, all the female relatives assemble in a room and, headed by the professional mourner, sing funereal songs. This is continued for the first ten days, and is called "Van."

For the next ten days, if the deceased be an old person, ceremonies are performed on the river bank, water is sprinkled and balls of rice offered. In the evening the priest reads a portion of a book containing a description of purgatory, heaven and hell and the state of the departed souls in the next world before their reincarnation. On the tenth day the sons have to shave their beards.

On the eleventh day, through the efficacy of the mantras, the soul of the deceased is translated to the world of ancestors—until then it is supposed to wander about.

On the twelfth day a special ceremony is performed to satisfy the cravings of the spirit thus departed for its earthly attachments.

On the thirteenth day mourners shave themselves and put on new, or at least clean, clothes. During the mourning days—i.e. the first twelve days—no one who is not a near relative can eat or drink in the house of the mourner, for it is thought to be infectious (hench).

After this, fortnightly, then monthly, and, after the first year, yearly ceremonies are performed. On these occasions the presence of the son, the performer of the sharada, is essential, water is sprinkled in a peculiar way in the name of the deceased, and balls of rice offered, and a small fire is kindled in the middle of the house.

There are two distinct theories held about transmigration :

1. It is believed that the soul is given another body, human, animal or vegetable, the moment it leaves the previous body. This is controlled by the law of Karma—i.e. according as the actions of the deceased during life have been good or evil.

2. The soul is translated to the world of spirits for purification. There it is given an astral body and allowed to stay for some time, and then it is allowed to soar to higher and finer spheres, according to its moral worth.

Peculiar Customs.—If anyone leaves his house first thing in the morning and an old, ugly woman, or a one eyed person, or a dog or donkey happen to come from the opposite direction, the unfortunate person will have either to retrace his steps or pass the time in great anxiety, fearing some misfortune. Educated men pay no attention to this nonsense, or pretend that they do not.

Pund or Sneeze.—Superstitious persons will never begin to do anything if someone sneezes. Rogues sometimes sneeze on purpose, in order to annoy others. They quietly put a straw into their noses and sneeze.

Crows, owls and kites are ominous birds, while bulbuls, swallows and hoopoes are considered fortune. The bulbul is considered to be the messenger bird; its chirp is supposed to foretell some guest.

When a person falls seriously ill the patient's relatives take a vow to offer a sacrifice, and a fat lamb is brought before the priest, who lays the sins of the patient on it. It is then either killed or set free in some forest. The latter is very rare, though preferred to the former. This sacrifice is called "Raja Kat."

Small-pox is believed to be inflicted by a goddess called Shetala. When it occurs in its horrible form the mother takes a vow to present a she-goat or a she-ass to propitiate the goddess, but this belief is dying out among the educated classes, who now accept vaccination. The poor goddess is thus defeated and cast off.

The Hindus keep fast on the day that an eclipse is to take place. During the time of an eclipse they perform sharadas, and give away rice and money in charity. The women with child are not allowed to go out to do any work. It is supposed that if they do any work during that time the child in the womb will bear those marks on its body. The men generally spend that time the worship if they are free. No food that is cooked before in eclipse is used afterwards, because it is believed that unwholesome atoms emanate from the discs of the sun and the moon at the time of an eclipse.

Two different theories are held regarding the eclipse :

1. That Rahu, or Kitu, two celestial giants (stars), endeavour to eat up the sun or the moon that is eclipsed.

2. It is a mere shadow (Chahya mater).

The second belief is held by the Sanskrit-knowing persons; the first by those who believe in tradition or folklore only.

In the centre of the Tehsil of Nagam (old Nagrama) there lies an alluvial plateau known as Damudhar Udar, where an ancient popular tradition surviving to the present day has preserved the legend of King Damudhar. The King built a town on the Udar. In order to bring water to it he had a great dam, called Guddasten, constructed by supernatural agency. One day when the King was going to bathe he was met by some hungry Brahmans who asked him for food. The King refused to comply with their request until he had taken his bath. The Brahmans, therefore, cursed him so that he became a snake. Ever since the unfortunate King is seen by the people in the form of a snake rushing about in search of water far and wide. He is not to be delivered from the curse until he hears the whole Ramayana recited to him in a single day. As this cannot be done, it renders his release hopeless. It is said that several Brahmans have attempted to help the King in this way, but their exertions

have always failed. The main features of this legend are well known throughout Kashmir. The inhabitants of the neighbouring villages point to a spot on the Udar, known as Satras Teng, as the site of Damudhar's palace.

Mohammedan Customs.—Marriages are generally arranged by a middleman, who appoints a day for nishani (engagement). On this day henna and some gold and silver ornaments are sent to the bride through the middleman. The bride's father gives a feast to the bridegroom's father and his party. On this day nikah, or the marriage contract, is drawn up and the mahra is fixed. The deed cannot be drawn up without the consent of both the bride and the bridegroom. They are therefore generally represented by some of their near relatives. The bridegroom's father has to pay the Qazi (ecclesiastical scribe), the mosque, the police, and various other people. On the following day the bride's father sends loaves and dressed meat to the bridegroom's father as a recompense for the trouble in paying him a visit. Some time after this engagement the marriage takes place. It lasts for three days in case of the son, and for two days in case of the daughter. Henna bandi is the first day. Feasts are given by both the parties to their friends and relatives. Henna and ornaments are sent to the bride. On that occasion all the women that have been called to the feast stain their hands and feet with heena. Merry concerts are held by women day and night. Next comes the wedding (enivaoal). A feast is given to the bridegroom and his party by the bride's father. The marriage procession starts in the evening towards the bride's house ; the procession is accompanied by torch-bearers, the torches being of several kinds. the low-class people and the boatmen march in a procession through almost all the streets and the chief markets of the city during the day. They are accompanied by a Kashmiri band, the loud noise of which seems to proclaim that the son of a grandee is to be married.

In the house of the bride a special hall is put in order. It is tastefully carpeted and dotted about with cushions. For the

bridegroom a masnand, or elevated seat, is arranged. The priest who is to tie the nuptial knot takes his seat in front of the bridegroom. The Qazi indites the marriage contract and settles the mahra (jointure) upon the girl. After this a sort of nuptial prayer is offered. This prayer contains praises of Allah and Mohammed. The Qazi subsequently addresses himself to the representatives of the bride and the bridegroom, and asks them whether they have accepted each other as husband and wife. On this occasion the bridegroom is presented with a gift of clothes by the bride's father. Then handfuls of sugar are either distributed or thrown on the floor, to be picked up by the men present.

On this point the Mohammedan community in Kashmir are divided. Some say that this sugar ought to be divided, while other hold that it ought to be scattered. This divergence of opinion has lately caused a great schism among the Kashmiri Mohammedans.

The bride stays in the house of the bridegroom for seven days. During this time the bride's father has to send various dishes and suits of clothes to the bridegroom's father. On the third day of the marriage dry tea, sugar and cakes are sent to the bridegroom. These are distributed amongst the bridegroom's friends and relatives. Dressed meat and cakes are again sent to him on the fifth day. These are also similarly dealt with. On the seventh day a large quantity of dressed meat and special prepared sweet cakes are sent to the bridegroom's father. Various garments are sent to him for the use of the bride. Besides this number of fowls proportionate to the number of the sisters of the bridegroom is sent to his house. This is very important, and upon this depends chiefly the future happiness of the girl. In default of the performance of this function, the poor girl is given a bad time, and is looked down upon as a shrew and called by various ugly names. The bridegroom also receives a bakshish, generally in the shape of a fine shawl.

When a person is near the point of death his relatives and all those who are present begin to recite the Kalima, and if possible the dying man too is made to recite the same. Immediately after the person's death his eyes and mouth are closed. His relatives fetch a big plank from the nearest mosque and place the body on it, with the face turned towards the sky. The body is then washed with warm water. A hole is dug inside the house, so that the water with which the body is washed may not run in all directions, but collect in the same hole. The body is washed by a professional washer called Ghusal. Meanwhile the shroud is made ready. It consists of three things—the Lafafa, the Azar and the Kamiz. The first two are merely two sheets of cloth, while the third is a long shirt with a rent in the middle. The body is wrapped in these things. Then scents are sprinkled over the body, and it is placed in a coffin brought from the mosque. Another piece of cloth is spread over the coffin, and it is surmounted with a curtain taken from some ziarat. The bier is then carried on the shoulders, and those who accompany it keep on reciting the Kalima. The bier is then laid in front of some ziarat, with the head of the deceased turned towards the north, and the people perform ablutions and offer a prayer which consists of four parts. The first part contains a reference to the holiness of God ; the Glorification and praise of His attributes ; the second part contains the benediction on the Prophet ; the third part is an appeal for the forgiveness of the sins of the deceased ; and the fourth is a solution to all present. This prayer is concluded by the Tabkir (Alluha-Akbar). The corpse is then taken to the graveyard and placed close to the grave. The topmost sheet is then removed, which is given to the sexton. The corps is lowered into the grave with its head turned towards the Kaaba. The grave is then filled up and the coffin returned to the mosque.

Up to the first Friday after the burial and relatives and friends of the deceased go to the graveyard early in the morning every day and recite a few verses of the Quran. They then wend their way to the house of the departed person and

reserved with light refreshments, in the shape of tea and cakes. The priest plays an important part in this business, and receives a handsome remuneration. The sexton gets a meal a day, and gets some oil on the following Friday. All the relatives and friends again visit the tomb of the deceased, while to the son or the daughter are presented gifts of muslim and cash by their relatives.

The Mohammedans believe that after the dead body has been deposited in the grave two angels, called Nakir and Munkar, come to him and ask him the following questions :—

1. Who is your God?
2. Who is your Prophet?
3. What is your Creed?

If he replies to these questions satisfactorily, and says—

1. Allah is my God.
2. Mohammed is my Prophet.
3. Islam is my Creed.

—he is shown divine mercy and is translated to heaven ; but if his answers are unsatisfactory the wrath of God descends upon him and he experiences the torture of hell and eternal perdition.

The Mohammedans also believe that there is one the top of hell a path called Surat. It is narrower than the breadth of a hair and sharper than the edge of a sword. Everyone will have to cross it. The virtuous will cross it with great ease, but the sinners will be hurled into the fires of hell.

When a man wishes to get rid of his enemy he goes to certain Brahman priests, practitioners of the "black art," who expect to be paid heavily for their work.

They make a figure of clay or wax which represents the victim. This figure they pierce with a sword or nails in that part of the body where the client wishes his enemy to receive the mortal wound. This art is done in private with incantations, and afterwards the figure is burned.

The Rev. T.R. Wade in his diary speaks of this ceremony having been performed by certain people in Kashmir who wished to rid themselves of himself, the Rev. Robert Clark and of the British Resident. Three fires were made for the Resident, two for Mr. Clark and one for himself. Notwithstanding, all three survived for many years, and both Mr. Wade and Mr. Clark lived to a good old age. Evidently something went wrong with the incantations.

On the other hand, I happen to know of a rich and powerful man in the country who wished to bring about the death of a more powerful and richer man by this means, and certainly this more powerful man did die with a pain in his stomach not long after, so I expect the Brahman priests congratulate themselves on their success, or, at any rate, in having raked in a good haul of rupees.

I also happen to know of a somewhat similar instance.

A certain great man wished that his son might possess a certain great inheritance, but someone else's son stood in his way, so he approached certain priests for help. They told him that he must bring a certain goddess to his country and place her in his temple, whom he must worship assiduously, large gifts of money, of course, forming the bulk of the worship ; but this worship would not be of any avail unless the procured the

shirt, clippings of hair and of toe and finger nails of the young man who stood in the way and placed them on the goddess.

If he fulfilled all these conditions this young man would most certainly die in the month of November, three months hence.

This great man fulfilled all the conditions. The goddess was brought to his temple and worshipped correctly. She wore the shirt, hair, and finger and toe nails' clippings, and much money no doubt changed hands.

The fatal month arrived, and the angel of death ~~also~~ arrived, but he carried off the worshiper and not the would-be victim, who still lives, I am glad to say. I wonder how the priests explained the mistake made by the Angel of Death on this occasion.

The people of Kashmir are very superstitious, and give themselves much searching of heart and trouble in consequence.

At this moment as I write the citizens of Srinagar are in terrible distress owing, as they say, to the visit of a frightful creature which no one has seen. It is supposed to have been seen by many people, though no one will own to having actually seen it, but everyone tells everybody else that it has attacked women and children, tearing their faces and their breasts. It visits the houses at night. Some say it comes out of the river, and others that it is like a great cat. Consequently everyone shuts tight their shutters on these hot, oppressive nights, and beats tins and tom-toms to frighten the terrible monster away. Hence there is no much chance of sleep for those who do not, and have to endure the continual din.

Some years ago a terrible beast was supposed to inhabit the river one summer. The schools were closed for the summer

vacation, and when we return to Srinagar were found that no one had bathed in the river for a month from fear of this beast, so I asked the boys if they would like to kill it. They answered in the affirmative, so I called upon them to meet me at the Amira Kadal bridge (the first bridge) at three o'clock to swim right through the city, a distance of three miles, to the seventh bridge, Saffa Kadal, so that this terrible beast might burst itself with swallowing so many boys, and thus would save their city.

At three P.M. punctually 130 boys leaped into the river. The bridges and banks and roofs of the houses were crowded with people to see what would happen.

Of course nothing did happen, and next day the city was washing itself once more, for the bogey was slain. Some of the people say that this one is the son of the last one, and look to the schoolboys to settle this one when the holidays are over and they return to Srinagar.

(1922)

CHAPTER 15

CULTURAL UNITS AND LANGUAGES

The State is composed of three cultural regions — Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir Valley. The official language of the State is Urdu but Article 145 of the State's Constitution provides that English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes in the State. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution recognises Kashmiri, Dogri, Balti (Pali), Dardi, Punjabi, Pahari and Ladakhi as regional languages. An Academy of Arts, Culture and Languages has been set up to afford opportunities for the development of Art and Culture and for the development of Hindi, Urdu and other regional languages in the State.

Population

The total population of the State according to the Census of 1941 was 40,21,615. Due to abnormal circumstances no census was conducted in Jammu and Kashmir State in 1950-51. With the restoration of normalcy and political stability census operations were conducted in the State in 1960-61 along with the other States of the country. The population of Jammu and Kashmir State excluding Pak and Chinese-occupied territory, as per provisional figures released by the Superintendent of Census Operations, Jammu and Kashmir, is estimated at 35,83,585 as against 29,48,106 of 1941 census, resulting in an increase of 6,35,479 in the population.

On the Indian side of the cease-fire line, there has been an increase of 21.5 per cent during last 20 years or 10.75 per cent

per decade. The corresponding increase between 1931 and 1941 was 10.3 per cent. The maximum and minimum growth of population have been recorded in the Doda and Poonch Districts respectively. In Doda District, the increase has been 16.95 per cent and in Poonch 0.63 per cent on an average for a period of 10 years. In the Ladakh District increase in population has shot up from 1.7 per cent in 1941 to 15.7 per cent during the last two decades. The decennial increase of 7.85 per cent appears to be due to the abolition of polyandry and return of Kashmiri Muslim refugees from Tibet.

The population of Srinagar City which has been included in Srinagar District stood at 2,07,787 in 1941. The corresponding figure for the present census is 2,84,753 showing an increase of 76,906 or 37.4 per cent in 20 years and 18.52 per cent in 10 years. The population of Jammu City which has been included in Jammu District stood at 50,379 in 1941. The population recorded at the present census stands at 1,08,562 resulting in an increase of 58,183 or 115.5 per cent in 20 years and 57.75 per cent in 10 years.

Literacy

According to 1960-61 census there are 3,81,753 literate persons in the State giving a literacy percentage of 10.6 as against 6.9 of 1941. The cities of Jammu and Srinagar claim largest number of literate persons, the literacy percentages being 44.8 in the case of Jammu City and 23.84 so far as Srinagar City is concerned. The highest literacy percentage among districts has also been recorded in the districts of Jammu and Srinagar where it stands respectively at 18.6 and 13.97.

The literacy percentage is lowest in the districts of Anantnag, Baramulla, Ladakh and Poonch where it ranges from 7.36 to 7.76. The literacy percentage of the Jammu Province is estimated at 11.90 as against 9.63 of the Kashmir Province including Ladakh. Among males, Jammu and Srinagar cities have

largest number of literate persons, the percentage being 50.46 and 32.36 respectively. Excluding the two cities, the percentage of male literates in these two districts is estimated at 24.72 and 19.91 respectively. The lowest percentage of male literates has been returned from Baramulla District where it is estimated at 12.49 only. The corresponding percentages for female literates are 35.99 and 14.1 respectively. The number of female literates in the districts of Ladakh, Baramulla, Doda and Poonch is comparatively much smaller, the literacy percentage being 0.87, 1.48, 1.73 and 1.98 respectively.

The literacy figures are likely to improve further rapidly during the next decade as a sequence to the policy of universalisation of education adopted by the Government.

To tackle the problem of backwardness of education, educational opportunities have expanded at a fast pace since the dawn of Independence. The Educational Budget in 1947-48 was only Rs. 33.49 lakhs which has now shot upto Rs. 250 lakhs. Education in Kashmir is a State enterprise and since 1953 free education has been introduced in the State from the Primary upto the Post- Graduate courses of instruction. The number of educational institutions since the beginning of the First Plan has increased by 100 per cent and by the end of the Third Five-Year Plan no village in the State will without a school.

During the Second Plan period, education in Jammu and Kashmir made big strides and the whole structure and content of Primary and Secondary education has been reorganised. In the First Plan period the Government established 5 Colleges, 3 Post-Matric Training Schools, 29 High Schools, 48 Middle Schools, 76 Central Schools, 30 Lower High Schools, 59 Primary Schools and 90 Maktabas and Pathshalas. By 1960-61 the number of Colleges in the State rose to 13 Higher Secondary Schools to 24, High Schools to 160, Middle Schools to 583, Primary Schools to 2,852 and the Post-Matric Training Schools to 12. During this

period the enrolment in these institutions rose from 2,10,256 to 2,67,586.

Primary Education in the State extends for a period of five years from the age of 6. In the Third Five-Year Plan it is contemplated to universalise primary education for the age groups 6-11 as is envisaged in other States of the Indian Union. Primary education in Jammu and Kashmir is steadily undergoing a change over to the basic pattern. In 1948 the State had only 1,190 Primary Schools with 65,000 pupils. Now it has 2,852 such schools with 1,97,000 pupils on their rolls. Secondary and Collegiate Education, too, have expanded appreciably since 1948. Expenditure on these have risen from Rs. 28.27 lakhs to Rs. 111.00 lakhs.

To give technical bias to the educational system two Industrial Training Institutions have been started in the State in accordance with the approved pattern of the Government of India. Instructions in different trades like Smithy, Carpentry, Weaving, Willow works, Motor Mechanics and Electricians' Courses are being imparted in these institutions. Deserving students who join these institutions are being granted scholarships. The intake capacity of these institutions in different trades is 328. One Polytechnic and one Engineering College have also been established at Srinagar. Two Agricultural Colleges one at Sopore and the other at R.S. Pora have also been opened from the current academic session.

To cope with the growing requirements of manpower, that is an obvious necessity for any scheme of universal Primary Education, the Government have set up a net-work of Post-Matric Training Schools. The Education Department has also chalked out an ambitious construction programme. The Department has spent about Rs. 40 lakhs in the Second Plan period on construction of school buildings. For the current year the Government have sanctioned Rs. 7.00 lakhs for this purpose. In

due course the Government proposes to provide for all State educational institutions their own buildings.

In the National System of Education the State of Jammu and Kashmir is forging ahead with its policy of free education and the State is progressively eradicating illiteracy and dispelling ignorance from among the masses. The Multiphased programme of education reconstruction includes:

- (a) Opening of Activity Basic Schools;
- (b) Conversion of Primary Schools into Basic Schools;
- (c) Setting up of separate Mobile and Audio-Visual Units in all parts of Jammu and Kashmir;
- (d) Conducting of refresher courses for in service teachers;
- (e) Opening of Post-Matric Training Schools;
- (f) Upgrading of Primary Schools to Middle Schools;
- (g) Upgrading of Middle Schools to High Schools;
- (h) Improvement of Secondary Schools by strengthening staff;
- (i) Conversion of High Schools into Higher Secondary Schools;
- (j) Improvement of Colleges by providing additional and sufficient staff;
- (k) Expansion of inspectorate by strengthening the Inspectional Agency;
- (l) Setting up of District Libraries;

- (m) Opening of Polytechnics and Engineering Institutes;
- (n) Provision of Youth Welfare Schemes; and
- (o) Construction of school and college buildings.

The Women's Education has also made considerable headway in Jammu and Kashmir. In 1948-49 the State had 215 Primary Schools, 49 Middle Schools and only eight High Schools for girls whereas today we possess 514 Primary Schools, 71 Middle Schools, 36 High Schools, three Colleges and two Teachers Training Schools for female education.

Library movement in the State is also receiving due consideration from the Government. Besides the school, college and public libraries, District libraries have been set up. In addition to free education the Education Department gives liberal scholarships to poor and deserving students. During the Second Five-Year Plan the Government granted scholarships to about 10,000 students for prosecuting their studies in schools and colleges.

To promote the welfare of teachers for the first time in the history of the State the Department of Education has prepared a draft of the Jammu and Kashmir Educational Code. A teachers' welfare fund has also been instituted. To enhance efficiency of teachers and vitalise instructions imparted in the schools, the Department has set up Audio-Visual Units, one in the Jammu Province and the other in the Kashmir Province. These units are equipped with a Mobile Library, Educational charts and Recording apparatus.

To supply standard text-books to students in the schools the Government have set up a separate Department of Research and Publications. This department prepares text-books for Primary and Middle Classes and since last two years printing of text-books is being undertaken by Government Presses. The

total volume of this work in 1960-61 involved printing of 8,16,24,000 pages giving a net yield of 5,48,500 books in Persian, Devnagri and Roman scripts. In addition to this work, the Government Presses also undertook printing of 5,48,500 title covers in multi-colours and printing of pictures and maps totalling 9,41,500. As a result of economy effected in the expenditure on production of text-books, relief has been provided to scholars by a general reduction of the sale prices of these books.

An all-round system of education must cater to the needs of the head, heart, hand and health. Physical and Health Education form an integral part of the State's educational system. Youth rallies, holiday camps, healthy inter and intra-college and school sports competitions, NCC, ACC and Scouting form a regular feature of Education in the State. To encourage such activities a Sports Stadium has been constructed in Srinagar at a cost of Rs. 17.00 lakhs. A similar stadium is under construction at Jammu.

Main Occupation and Staple Food

Agriculture is the mainstay of the State's economy. More than 80% of the population of Jammu and Kashmir depend for earning their living on land. Rice is the staple food of the people in Kashmir Valley. Wheat, Maize, Barley and Rice are the staple food of the people in the Jammu Province. Varieties of fruits grow in the State, viz. apples, pear, walnuts, almonds, saffron, quince, cherry, etc. The produce of the various districts of the State differs according to their altitude.

(Kashmir Today).

CHAPTER 16

FROM CULTURAL PAST TO THE FRONT

By
J.K. Banerji

We were in a small village near Badgam—a town not far from Srinagar. The villagers had come round and squatted on what may be called the village green or the nearest approach to it. Not all were present because it was in the middle of the day and there was work to be done in the fields. Nevertheless, there was a fair attendance; and the audience if it lacked in numbers made it up by the quality of their presence. It was an interesting and interested gathering.

AGRARIAN REVOLUTION DRAMATISED

What had brought the peasants from their work in the fields to come and squat on the village green was the arrival without notice from Srinagar of the dramatic party of the Cultural Front. The Cultural Front created immediately after Kashmir's invasion has set itself the task of awakening the Kashmiri masses from their age long mental torpor born of poverty, illiteracy and oppression, so that they could help transform their country from a backward medieval state into a progressive, secular democracy or perhaps into socialism.

The theme of the play is the social system in Kashmir where landlords, no matter whether Hindu or Muslim, live on the labours of the peasants. As I watched with what rapt atten-

tion the audience followed the story of the peasants in the drama who at first passive victims of exploitation ended up as rebels at the impact of National Conference agitation, I could not help being struck by the stupendous break of new Kashmir with the Kashmir of yesterday. And as I watched also some foreign journalists going round and round the audience "shooting" with their cameras held at various angles, I was reminded of the importance of Kashmir's present international role.

The Kashmiri people, ignorant and illiterate as their Indian brothers, are already being "educated" in the hard school of national and social struggle at a rate faster than in any school that might be built for them by a benevolent government. The social reality that is being unfolded before their eyes by the Cultural Front with the help of living drama and song played and sung by people—boys and girls—who almost without exception had taken up arms when the raiders were at the doors of Srinagar is only accelerating this process of living education.

DUAL SOURCE OF CULTURE

However, Kashmiris are culturally still very backward. In fact, their country is generally considered as one of the most backward spots in the Indian subcontinent. Yet, this beautiful country is the inheritor of a tremendous cultural past of which one does not generally suspect in India. And this rich cultural heritage—one of the richest in India—possesses an added interest in being a perfect example of the synthesis of two different religious-cultural currents Hindu-Sanskrit and Muslim-Persian—both participating in and mutually contributing to the common end-product.

History of Kashmir like that of India proves that people prospered and suffered not according to whether the ruler was Hindu or Muslim, but according to whether he was good or bad. Culture too prospered or suffered according to whether the ruler or the ruling caste was its friend or foe. Indeed, one

can say that the complete drying up of culture during the Pathan, Sikh and the British-sponsored Dogra rules is the most damning proof of their rottenness.

Hindu kings are supposed to have ruled over Kashmir for over 4,000 years. In his famous work "*Raj Tarangini*" (River of Kings) the famous historian Kalhana who lived in the first half of the 12th century A.D., has narrated the main episodes of this long period of Kashmir's history when no less than 21 dynasties rose to power and then fell.

Like ancient Indian history much of this narrative is vague and imaginative. But even when one rejects much of what is written by Kalhana and by many other historians like Ratnakara who came before him or Ahmad Alhama—Persian translator of the Sanskrit epic Mahabharata who came after, there are many landmarks whose authenticity is historical and not conjectural.

By the turn of the fourteenth century Kashmir passed under Muslim Sultans among whom the name of Zain-ul-Abidin is worth mentioning. He was tolerant, generous, a lover of arts and learning and it was he who introduced some of the industries such as paper-making, silk and shawl-manufacture which later on made Kashmir famous.

The Mughal rule which began at the end of the 16th century with Akbar's conquest of Kashmir and lasted upto the middle of the 18th century before Kashmir passed successively into the hands of the Afghans, Sikhs and then the British-sponsored Dogra Rajputs brought stability and prosperity in the land. But it was also the beginning of the end of Kashmir's remarkable cultural past.

Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah on the occasion of the opening of the Kashmir University in November recalled Kashmir's dual heritage of Sanskrit and Persian culture. How true it is!

Because whatever may be the inaccuracies in Kashmir's past political history, there cannot be any doubt about the remarkable achievements of Kashmir's cultural past.

HINDU PHASE

In History and philosophy, in literature and grammar, in astronomy and politics—Hindu Kashmir records great achievements. The Kashmiris helped very likely by the enchanting environment made great contribution to erotics—literature of love: Kamashastra written in the fourth century by king Vasunand and Kokashastra—a learned treatise on sex written later on by Premier Koka Pandit are universally known.

The tourist whose mind is preoccupied by the incomparable beauty of the landscape and of the handicraft of its people often is surprised to come across massive stone structures of ancient Hindu temple and other monuments in ruins. The ruins at Martand, Avantipura, Pattan and Wangat are mute witnesses of a notable architectural past.

MUSLIM PERIOD

With the establishment of Muslim rule Persian replaced Sanskrit as the court language and the Kashmiris gave once again proof of their literary creative power by quickly learning the new language and producing masterpieces in it. What might look surprising in these days of rank communalism is that not only Hindu Pandits still continued to produce important works in Sanskrit, some of them became scholars and literateurs in Persian. Hundreds of works, some of them first rate, were produced on history, philosophy, religion, geography, medicine and literature.

Outstanding among the Hindu Pandits who made important contributions to Persian poetry may be mentioned the name of Pandit Taba Ram Turki "Betab" whose Jang Nama reached classic heights.

No chronicle of the Muslim period however brief, can be complete without mentioning the beautiful Mughal gardens built by Jehangir and Shah Jehan as incomparable examples of man's aesthetic genius.

KASHMIRI LANGUAGE

Kashmiri which is the language of the people now, is a derivative of Prakrit which is itself a corrupt form of Sanskrit spoken by the common people when the latter was the court language. As early as the 13th century books had been written in this language.

Although there is a considerable amount of folk literature in Kashmiri, its development has been impeded by the lack of a proper script. Fundamentally, Kashmiri can be better written in Devnagari than in Urdu script. But Kashmiris by reasons of tradition and sentiment are not likely to give up Urdu script in favour of Devnagari. The most rational solution of the problem will be, it is believed, to adopt the Urdu script modified to suit the requirements of Kashmiri as it is spoken.

TOWARDS SECULAR CULTURE

I have taken some pains to speak of Kashmir's cultural past to emphasize the Hindu-Muslim base as well as the richness of Kashmir's ancient culture. But what is the use of a rich cultural past, one may say, when there are not among the people many who can even read or write? What is the use of delving deeper into the recesses of composite cultural heritage of the country, I was further told, when the intellectuals of the majority community are so little appreciative of the Hindu part of this heritage?

Taking the second question first I can not vouchsafe if the substance of it be true. But if it is true to some extent I will not be surprised. What about India? Is the appreciation among the intellectuals of each of the two major communities about the

cultural contribution of the other as wide, as complete or even as sincere as it should be? Of course we know that things would have been quite different if the cleavage between the Sanskrit and Persian culture on the bases of religion—Hinduism-Islam and then between the religious groups themselves that began from the time of Aurangzeb had not been brought to its unhappy but logical end by the British by permeating the whole country with the poison of communalism.

But in the measure Kashmir becomes secular, in the measure the seeds of universal culture taking root in the soil of the land give primacy to social values over religious ones in the collective life of the people, in the same measure cultural treasures of the past will tend to lose their religious stamp and appear before the eyes of the new generation not as Hindu-Sanskrit or Muslim-Persian but just Kashmiri. In this process of secularization of culture the activities of the Cultural Front should be of the greatest importance.

NO REVIVALISM PLEASE!

Harking back to old culture can not help the Kashmiri masses in making Kashmir modern and prosperous. Kashmir's Prime Minister expressed the hope on the occasion of the inauguration of the Jammu and Kashmir University that the new institution will aid the growth of real democracy in the country by bringing the benefits of scientific learning of the common man.

It is perfectly true that in the years lying ahead Kashmir will require more engineers, doctors, social workers, administrators, technicians than let us say, research workers in Sanskrit or Persian.

But man does not live by bread alone. Indeed, it is not an accident that Sheikh Abdulla added, in his inaugural speech, humanistic learning to the list of objectives of the new Univer-

sity. In the scheme of things of new Kashmir, crisp blue prints of technical projects will not be its only source of culture. Moth-eaten old manuscripts will be as highly appreciated.

(1948)

CHAPTER 17

CULTURAL HERITAGE

By
G.L. Kaul

The culture of Kashmir sprang from Aryans and was influenced during the course of history by Jews, Greeks, Turks, Chinese, Muslims and what not. Writes Arthur Neve "Ancient India had nothing more worthy of its early civilization than the grand remains of Kashmir." Says Kalhana "Kashmiris were called Shestrashilpira, i.e., architects." Kashmir is a fusion of cultures and languages. The principal cultural division of the State are—(a) Dugar (b) Ladakh (c) Baltistan (d) Gilgit or the land of Dards (e) Mirpur-Poonch-Muzaffarabad (f) Valley of Kashmir. About thirteen languages and dialects are spoken in this area, chief being Dogri, Kashmiri, Pahari, Ladakhi and Dardi. The ancient script of Dogri was Takri and of Kashmiri Sharda. Kashmir shared fame as an important seat of learning and culture with Nalanda and Taxila. Kashmiri literature combines in itself Persian and Sanskrit traditions and Islamic and Hindu philosophies. A Sanskrit inscription on a tomb in the Cemetery of Baha-ud-Din put up during the reign of Sultan Mohammad Shah in 1484 indicates that both Sanskrit and Persian were in use. A birch bark document in Sharda and Persian characters pertaining to Sheikh Makhdum Hamza, a Muslim saint of Kashmir, about 500 years old, reflects the Kashmiri's catholicism of outlook.

The earliest specimen of Kashmiri literature is Mahayney Prakash of Rajnakesiti Kanthe. Lala Ded who lived in the 14th

century A.D. expressed herself as a link between the classical Sanskrit traditions of the past and the Persian poetic patterns of later period. Munshi Bhawani Dass Kachroo was as great a Persian writer as Mohammad Tabir Gani. Jangnama by Taba Ram Turki stands on the same footing as Shahnama of Firdous. Rajkaul Arzbeg's diary and Rajkak Dhar's farrukh have a place in local literature. Persian tales of "Farhad and Shirin" and "Yusuf and Zulaikha" did inspire folklore but love-lyrics of "Bumbru and Lolare", "Himal and Nagrai" and "Bulbul and Myna" are very rich synthesis of romantic fancy and legend, purely indigenous. Gulrez of Pir Maqbool Shah Kralwari, Shahnama of Wahab Parey and Sudama Charita of Parmanand are also notable. Among the modern writers are Abdul Ahad Azad, Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor, Ghulam Hassan Arif, Dina Nath Nadim, Noor Moohammad Roshan, Ali Mohammad Lone, Amin Kamil, Shamim-Ahmad Shamin and Master Zinda Kaul. They do not only inspire but make the language. Lala Ded represents Kashmiri language and religious system of the fourteenth century influenced by Islamic thought and culture. Her spiritual preceptor was Sidh Bey. She became a devout follower of Trika philosophy. Besides she mastered Shat-chakras. Her poetry denounces rituals and welcomes all castes and creeds. Hindu sadhus and sanyasis influenced Muslim masses as much as did Muslim sheikhs and pirs Hindu masses. The product of this cultural fusion was Nur-ud-Din (Sahajanand) of Tsrar Sharif popularly known as Nund Rishi. Lala Ded and Sheikh Nur-ud-Din were followed by Haba Khatun and Urinimal, famous for Lol lyrics. Nearly two centuries after Haba Khatun came Urinimal, on the literary scene. There is more of pathos and tragedy in her songs.

The mystic and philosophic note is missing from the modern Kashmiri literature which opens with a fresh and free outlook on national and cultural life. This is represented by Mahjoor and Azad. The later was inspired by Rasool Mir. He expressed himself against injustice, intolerance and suppression. Side by side Daya Ram Ganjoo and Masterji strike a different

note. Asad Ullah Mir, Lachman Bhat Nagam, Nand Lal Ambar-dar and Abdul Wahab Hajin belong to the early phase of modern Kashmiri poetry. Abdul Sattar Gujri Aasi is a proletarian poet. He was sentenced to three months' imprisonment in "Quit Kashmir" movement for his poem 'Siasi Qaidi'. Dina Nath Nadim gives a socialistic message. Roshan's *Ashq* and Zutshi's *Vijwan* attracted attention.

Folk tales have their own place in literature. Folk music is traced to tenth century. Chhakri came from Afghanistan about 400 years ago. Soofiana Mausiqi came from Iran and has come down from man to man (unwritten). There are references that music had attained perfection in the time of Jaloka whose queen also danced. "Zohra Khatun and Haya Band", Gulala Shah, Wazirmal, Lalmaal, Shah Sayar, Sheshman are very well-known. There are also ballads like *Sudamacharita*, *Radha Swoyamvara* and *Shivalagan*. The Kashmiri muse sings through folklore, fresh and chaste. Ruff and Chhakri are the heritage of Kashmir's dynamic past and spirit of beauty around. Harvest season, wedding season, sowing season and long winter nights are occasions of drama and music. Kashmiri music and drama may be traced to books like *Sangitaculamani*, *Swaimatrika* and *kutmmabalam*. Soofiana kalam (classical) is derived from Soofism. The instruments accompanying the music are Saz, Santoor, Sitar and Dholak. Whether it is music or poetry, drama or painting, art or architecture, love or romance, the inspiration comes from Kongposh and Pamposh which dance and sing with moon and stars. "Cultural cosmopolitanism and cultural synthesis of the Kashmir literary tradition may be traced to the second century A.D. Kashmiri literature characterists have synthesized almost all cultural and religious traditions of India as manifested by Kashmiri poetry. The synthesis left an impact on contemporary Kashmiri thinking and living where various religious practices were mingled. The literary tradition of Kashmir was best represented in and described by two mythical images which were generally believed to have found currency in the second on fifth century A.D. One of them particularly

reflected the relationship between Kashmir and the rest of the Indian mainland in an image (not statue-of Vishnu on a lotus flower). In this particular image India is depicted by the body and Kashmir by the halo. Identical images have been found in the Nilgiris. Among the first notable work on Kashmir is Kalhana's *Rajtarangini*, a factual and unpretentious account of conditions in Kashmir during his time in which the author has explained the reason for ready absorption of cultures and religious traditions in Kashmir when in his references to Buddhism he proclaimed—we are not to argue with Buddhists. We are not to argue with those who differ from us. Roughly in fourteenth century Ismaili philosophy made its appearance in Kashmir following the Muslim invasion. The Kashmiris, according to the chronicler Balakshah, rejoiced in the return of a mystic system to their tradition. It was not till the 13th century, however, that a truly Kashmiri literature arose with the legendary poetess—Lalla Arifa. Her poems are still recited in all parts of Kashmir and retained their original freshness and surprisingly enough had retained their original forms despite the fact that they had been recited original forms despite the fact that they had been recited by professional Muslim minstrels for over 500 years. Some original texts reveal that even archaic forms of expression were retained. Kashmir Advaita Shaivism influenced Ismaili literature in Badakhshan, whether or not Shaiva Manuscripts followed or preceded a Kashmir invasion of the immediate west. Advaita Shaiva texts and Persian Ismaili texts of Badakhshan could provide much material"

—(Nila Cram Crook).

Under the auspices of the State Academy of Arts and Culture a Kashmiri dictionary in Persian script was attempted claiming larger collection of words than Grierson's which was based on the material collected by Ishwar Kaul, a well known scholar. The first grammar of the Kashmiri language was published in 1886 by Rev: T.R. Wade. History of Kashmiri literature

by Abdul Ahad Azad was compiled in three volumes. Translation of 'Nilamatpurana' by Dr. Ked Ghai is a valuable contribution. Jagan Nath Sheopuri's and Abdul Aziz's note book on soofiana music will carry forward this type of music which is an off-shoot of Indo-Iranian culture.

MYSTICS OF KASHMIR

1. Grata Baba
2. Sumbali Baba
3. Madrasi Baba
4. Mathra Devi
5. Paltu Shah
6. Akram Saib
7. Lakhman Ji
8. Nand Ram
9. Gupa Joo
10. Hari Ram
11. Mirak Shah
12. Nand Lal
13. Lasa Saib
14. Zaina Machi

They are guarding the spiritual frontiers of Kashmir.

CHAPTER 18

VILLAGE LIFE

By

Ernest F. Neve

The villages of Kashmir are full of human interest as we study the people in their natural environment.

The chief village population is found all round the valley on the higher ground which shelves up to the mountains, on the slopes below the foot-hills, the deltas of the tributary valleys and the sides of the karewahs. Here enormous areas of terraced rice- fields are to be found, stretching from the alluvial plain up to the base of the mountains. And as we go a little higher we find whole slopes covered with maize. The flat tops of the karewahs are used especially for wheat, barley, mustard and linseed, early crops which come to maturity before the scorching heat of summer parches the soil.

The life of Kashmir depends upon its agriculturists. The population of the Kashmir Province is 1,295,203 and of these probably more than a million are engaged in agriculture. In olden days the interests of the villagers were largely subordinated to those of the inhabitants of the city of Srinagar, many of whom were influential and all of whom were more immediately under the eye of the rulers.

Rice for the city was taken from the villagers at low rates. They were liable to frequent calls for forced labour. Every year the levy of coolies for Gilgit placed in the hands of the Tehsil-

dars (the district magistrates) great powers of oppression. And from the chief of the local administration down to the humblest peon of the Tehsil this was an unfailing source of income. Meanwhile, the poor and friendless, or those who had incurred the wrath of the authorities, were seized and sent off on the hated task of carrying loads a thirteen days' journey, over rough mountain tracks to Gilgit. Their condition was indeed little better than that of slaves.

"In May 1888 I was on cholera duty in Islamabad. Just as the epidemic was reaching its height, and hundreds were dying every day in all the districts around, a levy of 5000 or more coolies was called for. The villagers were almost distracted with fear. Who would do all the agricultural work? What would happen, during their long absence, to their wives and children? To what perils of pestilence and inclemency of weather would they themselves be exposed in the crowded bivouacs and snowy passes of the deadly Gilgit district? I was present at a sort of farewell service on a maidan outside Islamabad, when nearly 1000 men were starting. And when they took leave of the friends who had accompanied them so far, loud was the sobbing of some, fervid the demeanour of all as, led by the mullah, they intoned their prayers and chanted some of their special Ramzan penitential psalms. Braver men might well have been agitated at such a time. It is certain that cholera clung to the camp, and that unburied corpses of hundreds of these poor 'begaris' marked the whole line of march from Srinagar to Bunji."

In the year 1882 the State tried the remarkable experiment of auctioning the villages for revenue purposes. The purchasers in many cases bid amounts which were absurdly greater than the value of the village revenue, and after wringing all they could out of the unhappy villagers they absconded without paying the State a single rupee. This was bad enough. But to aggravate it the State actually professed to regard the sum offered at the auction as the real value of the village tax, and year

by year put pressure upon the unfortunate cultivators with a view to realizing this fictitious revenue!

The great land settlement, initiated by Sir Andrew Wingate in 1887, and carried through by Sir Walter Lawrence from 1889-1895, changed all this, and from that time the condition of the villagers has been one of increasing prosperity. Two among many evidences of this are the large areas of new land being annually brought under cultivation, and the numerous shops, which are springing up in the villages, stocked with cotton piece goods and other luxuries or necessities of civilization.

The abolition of the old method of a special low rate for rice, fixed by Government, was, however, effected too abruptly. It had been going on for generations, and the life of the poorer inhabitants of Srinagar was largely dependent upon cheap food thus obtained. When the market was thrown open in 1902, the price of rice rushed up to more than fourfold, and thousands in the city were threatened by starvation. The Government was compelled to readjust the situation and for a time to make grants of cheaper grain to those who were really poor.

Kashmiri villages are conspicuous in the landscape. There is usually a group of chenar trees, with light grey trunks, mottled with pale yellow, and massive curved limbs, with dense foliage forming dark green masses in summer and brilliant splashes of light red in the late autumn. Close by are two or three lofty poplars and lines of young saplings, bordering orchards of pear, apple and apricot, or market gardens enclosed by wattle fences. Mounds covered with large purple and white irises, brilliant and fragrant in the sunshine, mark the sites of the old village graveyards, and the hamlet itself shows as a collection of large high-pitched, straw-thatched gables, peeping out from among the mulberry trees (Plate 22).

These homesteads embowered in trees are surrounded by thousands of acres of arable land, terraced squares and crescents of rice- field, irrigated from small channels.

Rice ripens up to an altitude of about 7000 feet. It is the staple crop of Kashmir. There are at least sixty different varieties with distinct names; but there are two broad division viz., white and read. The former is considered greatly superior.

The successful cultivation of rice entails enormous labour. First of all the fields have to be constructed in terraces so as to allow of effective irrigation. Channels have to be dug for the distribution of the water. It is essential, when the rice has been sown or planted out from the nurseries, that the soil shall never again get dry. The weeding alone is a tremendous task. Rows of peasants may be seen standing in mud and water, bent down, scooping out all the adventitious plants and grasses, and plastering mud round the stalks of the young rice plants. This goes on day after day under a hot sun, and the fields have to be carefully and completely weeded no less than four times a year. Where, however, the rice plants have been transferred from nurseries, instead of being sown broadcast, twice is sufficient. This special weeding is called *khushaba*.

The Kashmiri is an absolute expert in rice cultivation, and unless early frost steps in, continuous rain at harvest-time, or one of the disastrous inundations to which Kashmir is so liable, there is usually a splendid harvest.

Throughout the valley there is very extensive irrigation. The water can be taken off at great heights from the tributary valleys, and there are also a large number of springs. The distribution is very wide and is said to be conducted on a system introduced by the Moghuls.

In and around Srinagar and the larger towns and villages lift irrigation is also carried on largely by means of a long pole

acting as a lever and working on a pivot upon a cross-piece resting on two uprights, or on the forked branches of a tree. The short end of the pole carries a large stone as a counterpoise, and on to the long end like the line of a fishing-rod hangs a thick rope with an earthenware bucket attached. This is rapidly lowered into the river or well by pulling on the rope and dragging down the end of the pole. When this is released the weight of the stone raises the bucket which, as it reaches the level of the ground, is emptied into a long boat-shaped tray of wood which acts like a funnel and conducts the water in the required direction. This form of irrigation is especially useful for market gardens. All the land really belongs to the State. But hereditary rights of occupancy have been granted to cultivators who pay their taxes regularly. They are not, however, allowed under any circumstances to sell or mortgage their land. This rule saves them from the clutches of the Hindu banias and middlemen. And if it is necessary for a villager to raise money, he can usually do it in advance on his standing crops.

A certain number of high officers and privileged persons, such as the Mian Rajputs, the clan of H.H. the Maharajah, hold estates in Kashmir, which are revenue free and not under the control of the Forest Department. These are called Jagirs.

The land revenue actually collected in Kashmir in 1890 was twelve and a half lakhs of rupees (£83,715). This is about what it was in the time of the Emperor Akhbar.

Of recent years, however, although the taxation has been reduced from fifty to thirty per cent of the total crops of the cultivators, the land revenue has greatly increased, and it is now more than half as much again as it was in 1890.

Entering the village, we usually find a broad track with grassy borders bounded by a rippling stream. Grateful shade is cast by large walnut trees, the deeply fissured and gnarled trunks of which rise from spreading roots which encroach on

the path. Some of these trees have a girth of 18 feet and more. The houses are mostly two storied, and they have a framework of wood which is filled in with sundried or, in the better houses, with red kiln-baked bricks. Under the thatched roofs in an airy space with stores of grass and firewood, and sometimes silkworms. The eggs of the latter are imported from France and to a less extent from Italy, and about 30,000 ounces are distributed annually to villagers, who place them in the roofs or rooms of their houses and hatch them. The young are then fed on the leaves of the mulberry trees which are so common. The cocoons when ready are purchased by the silk factory. In this way as much as 3,200,000 lbs. may be brought in by the villagers in one year, for which the Department of Sericulture pays over Rs. 600,000 (about £40,000). This goes to about thirty-five thousand villagers, giving them on an average nearly Rs. II/each, which makes it quite worth their while, as this is equivalent to at least two months' wages for an ordinary Kashmiri cultivator.

Most of the houses have a front verandah to the upper story in which the people live for the greater part of the year, and at one end of which is a little kitchen with clay fireplace. The inner rooms, chiefly used in winter, are dark and almost unventilated. The ground floor is often set apart entirely for cattle and sheep. If this arrangement secures warmth for the dwellers above, it is at some sacrifice of sweetness. Every village has several granaries, small square wooden buildings, the floor of which is raised a few feet above the ground. And not far away is sure to be a village shrine (Astan) often on an eminence and usually with fine old trees in the vicinity. The Mosque is probably near by, and in its roof may be seen the wooden bier in which the dead are carried to the graveyard to be interred without a coffin. At daybreak and at sunset the voice of the muezzin sounds out, calling the faithful to prayer, and soon a small congregation gathers and the Imam conducts the Namaz. In some mosques the congregation chant their prayers almost in Gregorian style.

Often the sides of the houses are festooned with bright rows of red chillies or split turnips, golden maize cobs and dried apples.

In the courtyard in front of a house we see two women busily engaged in pounding the unhusked rice in a large wooden mortar with pestles 5 feet long. First one straightens herself, lifts the pestle as high as she can, and then bending suddenly brings it down with a crash. Then the other woman facing her does the same. This is perhaps one of the commonest sights in the village. On a stretch of green, there is a row of upright sticks at intervals of 2 feet. These are for weaving purposes. One of the villagers may be seen walking up and down rapidly winding from a spindle a thread of cotton in and out of these stakes. In the verandah an old woman is seated with masses of snow-white cotton-wool in front of her, from which, with the aid of a curious old wheel, she is spinning excellent thread. A peep through the window of another house shows a rough loom in which woollen blankets are woven. This is one of the staple village industries. A common arrangement is for the local shopkeeper to advance money on the promise of repayment in blankets and garden produce.

According to the Kashmiris there are six seasons in the year, each of two months. "Wandh," with a somewhat similar sound, corresponds to our English winter, or at least with the time from 15th November till 15th January. During this period and on till the end of March, the first ploughing for wheat and barley is done. Then rice, maize and the other autumn crops are threshed; and when the snow falls towards the end of December the people weave woollen blankets, and attend to their sheep and cattle. "Sont" is the period from 15th March to 1st May. This is an extremely busy time. The fields have to be ploughed and manured for rice and maize. And then these are sown. In many villages the rice is sown in nurseries, and the seedlings are planted out when they are nearly a foot high. Broadcast sowing gives better crops but entails considerably

more labour in weeding. The wheat and barley harvest begins in the valley at the end of May, and during the whole summer the harvest goes on at the various altitudes. Linseed is a little later than wheat. From July to September the peasants are busy in the fields weeding the rice, maize and cotton.

The last is a very pretty crop, with its large yellow flowers followed by snowy tufts. The real harvest of Kashmir comes on the September and October, called by the Kashmiris the season of "Hard." It is then that the rice and maize, millet, sesame, amaranth and other autumn crops are gathered in. And now the fruit trees are laden, and before long from all parts of the valley strings of ponies may be met, and lines of coolies carrying baskets of apples and pears and sacks of walnuts, most of which will find their way to Baramula and be exported from there by cart to the plains of India.

At harvest-time all round the valley, but especially near the fringe of the forest, the villagers are troubled by the depredations of bears. The fields of maize and the fruit on the trees are a great attraction. To guard their crops the people erect "machans"—little roofed platforms twelve to twenty feet above the ground. Here they sit and watch at night and blow trumpets, beat drums, old kerosene tins, or anything else which will make a noise. And at the same time they emit blood-curdling yells, or piercing whistles, all with the object of terrifying the nocturnal robbers. The combined effect of fifty or a hundred people thus engaged at night over a comparatively small area of cultivated land is somewhat suggestive of pandemonium.

Kashmir is particularly rich in fruit trees. Many of these are indigenous and found wild in the forests. The people are quite clever at grafting. The stock is cut off rather low, and into the end three or four scions are wedged and supported by clay surrounded by birch bark. Ring budding is also successfully practised. In addition to the ordinary fruit trees, currants, raspberries and gooseberries are found wild. Apricots are also

common. The fruit has been all immensely improved by cultivation and the introduction of choice varieties.

The grapes are rather disappointing. In the valley, rapid night radiation in the autumn, and the heavy dew, together with the great sun heat in the day, appear to favour blight and other disease. At the mouth of the Sind valley there are some good vineyards producing delicious white and red dessert grapes.

On the east side of the Dal Lake there are about 400 acres of wine grapes, and at the distillery, under M. Peychaud's skilled supervision, wines of the Barsac and Medoc type are produced. The vintage varies much from year to year. It is said that the soil is deficient in iron and phosphates, and that the frequent difficulty in obtaining perfectly ripe grapes affects both the quality and keeping powers of the wine.

Hops grow well in Kashmir. In the summer the growth is very rapid. A market is found for them in the Murree and other breweries.

A large number of sheep are kept by peasants who live in the valley. These all have to be sent up to the hill pastures in the summer to escape the intense heat and get fresh grazing. They are entrusted to shepherds who bring them back again in the autumn and receive two per cent of the flock if it is intact. They are also paid in rice and are allowed all the butter made from the sheep's milk.

The cows, which are numerous in the villages, are small, and they usually appear to be half starved. They seldom give more than six pints of milk a day. A cow may be bought for about twenty rupees.

In the sides of some of the houses in the villages we see a circle with a hole in the centre into which bees are seen to be crowding. These are the Kashmir hives.

They are merely earthenware cylinders, about 2 feet long, and built into the wall. The outside end of the hive has a central hole about an inch across, or sometimes a series of small holes in a circle. The inner end has an earthenware lid fitted over it and sealed on with clay. No artificial feeding is done in the summer, but in winter the bees are supplied with food. No special measures are, however, taken to protect them from the cold, and the mortality is often very great. In many villages, after a severe winter, when the temperature sometimes falls to zero Fahrenheit, more than three - quarters of the colonies will perish. Under favourable conditions strong colonies are formed. Early in May the swarms issue. One hive may give off as many as six, weighing from two to four pounds each. The villagers usually expect the swarms to settle and hive themselves in one of the numerous empty wall hives. The bees are not accustomed to English hives, and it is extremely difficult to retain them. In many cases it appears advisable to fit a strip of queen excluder zinc across the entrance to prevent the queen from leaving. Usually this can be safely removed after two or three weeks. But I have frequently lost swarms in spite of this precaution. One colony left the hive and deserted its brood two months after it had been introduced. This was, however, due to persistent attacks of bee-robbers. Where Kashmir bees are kept in wooden hives there seems to be an unusual amount of fighting and robbing. The local earthenware hives do not appear to attract outsiders. Hornets, however, are often seen attempting to get in. The wooden hives perhaps emit an odour from their joints, for they are pestered by hornets, worried by robbers and sometimes in the spring a swarm will descend upon an already occupied hive.

The Kashmiris understand something of the management of queens. They sometimes secure a restless queen by tying a

fine thread to one of her legs and pinning her to the comb. Sometimes, too, they change queens, and they cut out queen cells quite cleverly.

Two harvests may be obtained, one in June and the other in October. The back of the hive is opened and smoke is blown in, and the combs are rapidly cut out. The bees are gentle, so comparatively few are killed. No proper care is usually taken of brood comb, and insufficient supplies are often left for the survivors. Sulphur is, however, not used.

The bees are wonderfully tame. I have often manipulated them without the use of any subduer. As in Europe, there appear to be two chief varieties—the yellow bee and a darker kind. In the yellow variety there is a fairly broad transverse stripe on the back, with four parallel pale yellow bands below. The ventral surface of the abdomen is yellow, and the thorax is covered with light brown fur. The lowest stripe is a little broader at the middle, which makes the bee look as if it had a white tail. The wings when folded reach to the lower margin of this stripe.

Wild bees appear to be yellower and to have slightly longer bodies than the domesticated varieties. I have seen them as high as 12,000 feet above sea-level. The favourite altitude for wild colonies is between 5500 and 7000 feet. It is too hot for them in the valley in the summer; but all round the hills in the mountain villages they thrive. The forests are full of wild balsams and the slopes are covered with wild sage. So great is the attraction of the mountain and forest flowers that many swarms desert the valley in the spring but return to their village hives again in September.

Both hornets and ants are troublesome enemies. When hornets threaten the hive the bees come out and form compact groups, and as the enemy approaches they lower their heads and, with a peculiar quivering movement, turn their tails with

the sting exposed towards the intruder, who usually veers off. Hornets, however, sometimes carry off one or even two bees at a time. Occasionally a bee with bold spirit takes decisive action. Perhaps, like Sir Nigel Loring, she regards the hornet as a "courteous and worthy person with whom some small bickering may be had." Or possibly, Marcus Curtius like, she seeks, by sacrificing herself, to save the whole community. I have seen a bee suddenly dash out from the armed circle of defenders and pierce a formidable hornet four times her own size, inflicting a fatal wound. But all are not so courageous, for one day I placed a dead hornet on the alighting-board when the sentry had gone in for a moment. A casual bee coming out for an evening walk suddenly and unexpectedly caught sight of the orange-coloured monster, gave a most dramatic start, and then hastened back to her own quarters. Whether she spread the alarming news I know not, but almost at once a fierce and stalwart worker emerged and, single-handed, seized the unwelcome intruder and threw him off the platform. In their behaviour toward ants bees seem rather timid. Ignoring them unless they come quite near, they even then appear to chase them with some apprehension lest the ant should turn and seize them by the nose.

Large ants are the most formidable of all foes. They will sometimes raid a hive like a band of Masai warriors attacking a village. There is a large black variety half an inch long with powerful mandibles, with which they literally cut off the bees' heads. Should an invasion of these occur, the bees will leave the hive, but not before large numbers have been massacred. Fortunately the defence is easy, as it is only necessary to stand the legs of the hive in water.

No one in Kashmir has yet succeeded in getting bees to work properly in the upper sections of a standard frame hive.

It will be interesting to see whether the introduction of English or Italian queens will result in greater industry, or

whether their progeny, to, will succumb to the somewhat enervating influence of the climate and the summer and autumn droughts.

As the autumn draws on in Kashmir the days remain bright and hot, but the cold at nights becomes increasingly intense. Early in September excellent snipe-shooting is to be obtained, and large numbers of duck begin to fly over the valley. On some of the lakes wild waterfowl are very abundant. In 1906 Lord Minto and the Viceregal party shot 1500 duck in one day on the Hukra Jheel. When shooting is going on, the duck rise from the lakes and marshes in clouds and wheel round in tens of thousands, some at a great height.

After the middle of October the leaves rapidly change their colour. Poplars and mulberries become lemon-yellow, chenars a pure light red, and apples and pears orange and crimson. At this season the willows are pollarded and their saplings and leaves stored for winter fodder for the flocks. In the hedges blackberries are abundant. In the evenings at this time of the year a blue mist hangs over the valley and round the foot of the mountains, which take on exceedingly rich orange-coloured tints as the sun sets.

In the winter snow usually falls in the third week of December. After that, sometimes for six weeks, the whole country is snow-bound, clouds settle down upon the mountains and there is no sunshine. The cold then becomes very great. Occasionally the Dal Lake is frozen sufficiently to bear. I have on two occasions skated from the distillery at the south end to beyond the Nassim Bagh, 3 miles to the north-west. It is not, however, very safe, as there are warm springs.

Every morning, during the winter, thousands of jackdaws leave the city and fly in dense clouds out into the country in search of food. About five o'clock in the evening they return. In

fine weather they fly high. If, however, the weather is threatening, they skim just over the tops of the houses and trees. It is interesting to watch their flight. The whole army appears to be composed of divisions. As they advance, a cloud of scouts is thrown out in front. On reaching the outskirts of the city the front battalions settle on groups of trees in such numbers that the whole tree becomes black and the branches are weighed down. When the rear divisions arrive there is much wheeling and maneuvering and evidently different clans occupy distinct trees, for which sometimes active skirmishing is carried on. When, however, the last stragglers have arrived, the whole force rises in a dark cloud and makes its way to the city, where the night is spent roosting in trees and under the eaves of houses.

The valley of Kashmir is remarkably calm. With the exception of thunderstorms in the summer and occasional gales early in March, it is extremely rare to have a windy day. The rainfall varies much from year to year. It is usually between twenty-five and thirty-five inches. The heaviest rain is ordinarily towards the end of July, corresponding to the full development of the monsoon in North India, and it is then that there is great danger of floods.

One of the commonest of Kashmir birds in the village is the white-cheeked bulbul. These have a graceful feather crest curving forwards and nearly 2 inches long. They are quite domesticated and often come indoors, perching on tables and chairs or even on the edge of a tea-cup, the sugar at the bottom of which has special attractions for them. With a little trouble they can be taught to catch crumbs thrown in the air, and they will perch on the back of one's hand. Swallows are exceedingly common. They usually arrive in March and build their nests in April and May.

Small game is not nearly so common in Kashmir as might be expected. There are no hares nor wild rabbits in the valley.

On the hills the chikor partridge is common. It belongs to the genus of rock or sand partridges, and is found usually just above the line of cultivation among the rocks. Coveys are often seen in the fields at harvest-time, and they are met with up to an altitude of 9000 feet. The monai pheasant is the most handsome of all Kashmir birds. The cock is magnificent, with rich peacock-blue plumage with golden-red sheen. These pheasants are not very common. They live chiefly at the upper margins of the forests.

The valley is infested with rats. In the summer they live in the fields and farmyards. In the winter they crowd into the houses and to immense mischief. They would be still more numerous were it not for the large number of half-wild cats which take up their abode in the roofs and basements of the houses and do valuable service. It is an interesting fact that when Kashmir was attacked by plague there was no evidence of any rat infection.

As we walk through the village we notice the little shop, the tawny-yellow or black dogs stealthily walking about, the flocks of ducks busy gobbling in the stream and the little bathing-houses close by.

Ploughing is done with small bullocks and the ploughs are small, for deep furrows are unnecessary. Rice cultivation is the great interest of most of the inhabitants of the valley. It speaks well for the fertility of Kashmir that although there is only one annual rice crop, in good year excellent rice may be bought at a halfpenny per pound.

It is in the villages that we see the real Kashmir life. The language, dress, complexion, manners and customs of the people are quite distinct from those of any other country. Probably few people have undergone less change in the march of the centuries than this nation, in its isolated valley, separated by gigantic mountain ranges from all the countries

around and, until the last quarter of a century, connected with India only by a rough bridle track more than a hundred miles long.

(1915)

CHAPTER 19

GLIMPSES OF RURAL KASHMIR

By
S.N. Dhar

Kashmir, like the rest of India, is mainly rural. Ninety per cent of the population of Kashmir lives in villages, which are scattered all round the Valley on the higher ground, running up to the mountains and on the alluvial plains. Rural Kashmir is mainly Muslim as fifty per cent of Kashmiri Hindus—called Kashmiri Pandits—live in the city of Srinagar and the rest, amounting to a bare fraction of the population of Kashmir, are sparsely scattered through the villages.

CHARACTER TRAITS OF THE KASHMIRI PEASANT

The Kashmiri peasant is harmless—an unconscious but true votary of the creed of non-violence. Centuries of poverty, hard work and exploitation have bent his back and rendered him incapable of bouts of violence or revolt. Even his dog does not bite though he may bark much and assume fierce looks. Rivers, streams and lakes that plentifully irrigate his rice fields, bear no dangerous reptiles and the nearby forest denizens do not molest him much, beyond the occasional ravages of maize fields by the malicious bear, the only terror of his peaceful land.

The rains come. The snow-fed streams never run dry. Nature rarely sends him into paroxysms of despair. So he takes an easy, complacent view of life—sings his folksongs, while working in the fields or enjoying the moon-lit scene of his fields

from his watch-lofts, repeats his ancient ballads and passes on the rustic lore and lost in the mystical influence of nature around him, forgets his penury, is unconscious of his ignorance and resigns himself to the monotonous round of his hard, farming life, year in and year out.

That is not to say that the Kashmiri peasant is very conservative. At least the younger generation is not so. The peasant has begun to interest himself in matters of politics. He knows the leader of the National Conference—Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah—which is the biggest political organisation in the State. He has heard the Shaikh's speech in the nearby town. The Patwari, the Tehsildar and other revenue officials are no longer sources of horror to him. Nor is he now affraid of the mere sight of the police-man's turban, as he used to be!

"In Kashmir one so quickly realises what an arrant coward the Kashmiri is at heart, in spite of his fine physique," so writes Margaret Cotter Morrison in her *A Lonely Summer in Kashmir*. That is an uncharitable dictum of the nature of a Kashmiri by a lonely, fair-skinned lady who spent an unprotected summer in Kashmir and whose life and chastity were, as she is good enough to admit, saved by her peasant guide during her treks in Kashmir. The Kashmiri is not so much of a coward as his effeminate, gown, the Pheran, leads the specious visitor to suppose. He is more harmless than timid. Dr. Ernest F. Neve calls the villager "a wonderful person when he admires his athletic body, his good humour and cheerfulness and the deftness of his hands.

SATARA AND HIS COTTAGE

Satara, a Kashmiri villager, is a typical peasant. He is the head of a large family, consisting of his wife, his three sons and their wives and children, over which his three sons and their wives and children, over which he is the undisputed patriarch. Let us have a look at his cottage, its interior and environs.

As you step into the yard, a sturdy bull—the apple of Satara's eye—faces you. Seeing you, an alien to the place he pulls at the tether and sniffs at you. An offensive and filthy smell pervades the courtyard. It is slopy on all sides and forms a depression on one side of the cottage, wherein rain water and melted ice get logged up. Several dogs, lean and lanky, drowsily bark at you. They are as gentle as the soil. Your stick quite scares them away. Almost the whole of the compound is strewn with dried hay and drying cow-dung. On one side, under a walnut tree, a close nook is reserved for pounding paddy. Several willows, standing on the side of the nearby stream in no order at all, blow a fresh breeze. They form a picturesque foreground to the surrounding conspicuous landscape; crystalline tributaries of rippling channels divided among green fields, dotted with mulberry and other fruit trees, lofty poplars and majestic chinars, grassy meadows and beautiful uplands at the foot of the distant snow-capped mountains. The courtyard is half fenced by a dilapidated mud wall.

A cackling hen soon engages your attention. Walking in a matronly gait, she is followed by a brood of chickens and small geese, her foster-children. The vain, strutting cock looks askance at you. In a corner you espy a piebald she-goat and a lovely kid by her side. The restless, hungry kid cannot get at the full udders, as Sula, one of Satara's grand-children, has wrapped them tight within a Puttoo bag. The goat, at the sight of Rahman, Sula's father, carrying grass, gets loose. The kid bleats appealingly after the retreating figure.

Satara's cottage is worth seeing. It contains two rooms and a walled-in corridor. The whole structure, made of local mud bricks, is heavily roofed with thatch. The dark, big room has no ventilator, unless some chinks serve the purpose of airing it.

On one side of the corridor, there is the fire-place, in which more of cowdung than fire-wood is wastefully consumed as fuel. Cooking is done in rustic clay pot. The smoke proceeding

from the hearth thickens the gloomy darkness of the big room, which comprises drawing-room, sleeping-room, dining-room and indeed all-purposes-common-room sort of thing for the whole family. The floor is strewn with grass and a mat made by Ahmdoo, Satara's own mat covers one corner of the room. On it sleep the ill-clad babies during the day.

Dusty clothes hang on swinging ropes. Tattered quilts, old blankets, worn clothings are all, in a heap, hung on a pole, which swings on ropes parallel to the roof-beams. A dirty blanket covers the whole stuff obviously to ward off curious or jealous eyes.

The exterior of the cottage is neatly plastered with clay mixed with cow-dung by the woman. The sides are brightly festooned with red chillies and split vegetables.

Ahmdoo told me confidentially about the big room. "In winter this room is very comfortably hot, as if ten of your city stoves were heating it. Our cattle do the work of the stoves." He added that the ceiling was low for that very purpose.

"But why is there no window?"

"Oh, sir, foolishly enough we opened a window, when we built the cottage. Damn the Patwari's city-bred son who then made us to do so. And then, what happened? A thief broke in and stole away all our precious property—my father's saddle, my son's mother's trinkets and our only degcha."

After I realized the "son's mother" was Ahmdoo's wife(!) I pitied his ignorance which complements and largely proceeds from his poverty.

Quite justifiably Sir Francis Younghusband remarks about the villager: "Like his house he is dirty, untidy, and slip-shod".

He also criticizes his untidy, unbecoming clothing, the Pheran, which lacks all grace.

DIET AND HEALTH

To return to Satara, his diet is extremely simple. He is, on the whole, a vegetarian. He tastes of meat on several proud occasions in the year—the Id, the marriage, circumcision and other ceremonies. If he has some fowls, he or his family hardly, if ever, touch them or their eggs, which are carefully stored and stowed away to be sold in lump sum. Sula was (reluctantly) doled out one egg per week, when his eyes were sore for three months and the city doctor, who, Satara told me, kept him waiting for three hours outside the hospital consultation room, prescribed one egg a day.

In his sage manner, Satara said to me, "You see, sir, I had to consider the doctor's prescription. After all I am the local Hakim. I have so much experience. I knew one egg a day would be too heating for Sula's eyes. So I altered it to a weekly egg". Hypocritically enough I applauded his wisdom, because I knew how difficult it would be to change his set views.

When I first came into the dingy living-room of Satara, I discerned a heap under a blanket on the rough mat.

"What is that there?" I asked Satara.

"Sir, he is my grandson, Rahman. He has been ill these seven days. I have put him to Sharbat."

Satara, the Grand Old Man of the village, was its quack-Hakim. He told me that he had prescribed the Sharbat water boiled in certain herbs.

"Rahman, give me your right hand", I said to the patient.

"Why, Sir?"

I detested their habit of using "Sir" to me, but the habit went back to centuries of lives of serfdom and exploitation and they used it in spite of my protestations.

"I want to feel your pulse", I said to Rahman.

"Pulse, what is that, sir?" Then, after some thinking, the starving lips opened and the bashful boy spoke, "I have none, sir".

Suppressing a chuckle, I explained 'pulse' to him and felt the dirty wrist which painfully stuck out of the dirtier Pheran.

I deplored how Satara and his people were largely unconscious of the deficiencies of their diet. His staple diet, which his sons take even four times a day during long summer days, is rice. To it is added some cheap vegetable in season. Milk or milk products are a luxury rarely indulged in. Some fortunate babies get sips of cow's milk off and on.

On the other hand, let me recall my experiences as a guest in a Kashmiri Pandit family in a village. The climate and water of the village suited me well, but not the diet and the 'dishes', for the preparation of which the sister-in-law of my friend, Shambu, took incredible pains. The meat was overladen with salt. Sag, the one universal vegetable, which is taken morning and evening, throughout the year, had too much chilli. Chilli seeds stuck in my throat. As I learnt later, the culinary standard of villages consisted mainly in the quantity of spices, salt and chilli, added to the preparation.

Satara and his family live an open-air life in late spring, summer and early autumn, but for late autumn, winter and early spring, he and his family are shut up in dingy rooms along with their live-stock.

I am sure Satara must be an octogenarian. I asked him his age once.

"Well, I don't know, sir".

"Why?" was my surprised query.

"We maintain no record of our age. My mother used to tell me, sir, that I was born during the Great Famine. I remember having seen Maharaja Ranbir Singh....."

After he had finished his fond reminiscences, I explained to him what date of birth was and how it is maintained, but he interrupted me with, "But I don't need any such records for myself or for my family. We are not to go to the Darbar (government office) like you".

Satara is gaunt, wiry and straight. He carries his age lightly. So do his sons. The secret of his health, apart from heredity and open air life, is work. Now that he is unfit for the rigours of farming, he tends the cattle in the village lawn and at home, he spins yarn for the blankets that are woven by his sons in winter. He belongs to the last of the Grand Old Peasants.

Sula and other bright-looking children look rather pale. But they have great resistance. Their bright eyes give them "win-some" looks. The women, tanned from work in the farm, have excellent health. Pounding paddy also gives them fine exercise.

Many Kashmiri Pandits lived in the village, Vachi, where I lived as the guest of Shambu. I had expected hygienic living habits from them but I was soon disillusioned.

It was early morning. There was no stir in the village. I plucked a Dattan—a twig to brush my teeth with—from a willow tree and sat by the Ghat on a stone enjoying a fine scene of the crystalline stream flowing amidst beautiful, overhanging

willows. The eastern sky over the snow-capped mountains was lit up with gorgeous colours, shedding a rosy hue on the snow peaks of the western mountain ranges.

Two figures approached the Ghat towards me. Could they be housebreakers posing a decent appearance? Presently I discovered them to be two village boys, Shamlal, my recent acquaintance, and a stranger Muslim. Shamlal represented the educated gentry of the village. He had passed the primary standard examination, the highest academic distinction that the village school afforded. They had the village habit of getting up early. Sheer common sense makes them leave their beds earlier than they would because none of them possesses a private latrine. They all rush to the public one, the open ground near the Ghat, under the cover of twilight. Otherwise when the sun makes his disconcerting appearance, the villager has to trot off to an uncomfortable distance to ease himself.

Shamlal did not introduce me to his friend. The civilising introduction habit has not yet penetrated the iron folds of village conventionalism. I introduced myself to the Muslim boy, who gaped at me in wonder when Shamlal told him my educational qualifications.

In for a chat, Shamlal began, "what are you doing here?"

"I am chewing a Dattan, as you see," I said, rather brusquely.

"It is so cold today, and yet you chew a Dattan?"

"Nothing strange". I told him how teeth must be kept clean and must be cleaned several times a day.

Shamlal put forward the old argument of a villager's poverty for not cleaning the teeth daily. I bought home to him that willows were abundant in every Kashmiri village.

"Just see, Dhar Sahib, my teeth are clean though I've not cleaned them more than a score of times....." He went on in that vein. I found his teeth, on close examination, like every other villager's teeth that appear clean from a distance—like women with small pox scars on their unhappy faces, but the gums were overladen with rotting scum.

LIVING HABITS

A visit to a typical village in Kashmir is an unforgettable experience. Against the background of lush fields, forest-clad mountains, network of crystalline streams and babbling brooks, the village looks picturesque. But a closer scrutiny lays bare the dark and ugly spots.

Filth and dirt—the natural outcome of dirty living habits of the villagers—meet the visitor's eye everywhere in all such villages, whereto the campaign of the Rural Uplift Department has not penetrated. The lanes are abnoxiously dirty. The drains in the bigger villages, if they exist at all, are rarely swept. They are logged with mud and rubbish. They are just apologies for drains, just ruts by, or, even between the wayside, more natural than artificial!

Satara's wife and daughters-in-law sweep the house and throw that and other refuse just behind the cottage, where it goes on accumulating into a wall of rubbish. So does every other village woman by force of habit, as it were, in spite of epidemics of small pox, cholera and typhus, which take a heavy toll whenever they spread.

VILLAGE OCCUPATIONS

Rice is the biggest and staple crop of Kashmir. Rice cultivation is the chief occupation of the peasant of Kashmir. It entails enormous labour in the formation of terraces and watering them, before and after transplantation of rice plants from nurseries, weeding the adventitious plants, the harvesting and stor-

ing in the granaries. Rice is in every sense a product of the sweat, blood and tears of the peasantry. The soil of Kashmir with its extensive irrigation under the tributary system introduced by the Moghuls, yields a single but fertile crop of rice. Maize is grown in the unplands as far up as the wooded mountain slopes.

Autumn is the harvest season, Harud, of Kashmir, when rice, maize, millet, sesame and amaranth are harvested and stored. Listening to harvest songs sung by peasants in field and farmyard is delightful. The willows are pollarded. Dry leaves are collected from under the chinar, which looks reddish brown owing to radical change of colour of its leaves. To protect the maize crop from the depredations of the bear, the terror of the forests of Kashmir, who steals down from the mountain side during the night, peasants erect roofed platform-like lofts, ten or more feet above the ground level and yell and scream and make all possible noises with their whistles, beating old kerosene tins filled with pebbles or drums or trumpets, or in the exquisite moonlight, when their eye commands a pretty good distance, they lustily sing melodious folksongs in chorus.

One of the peasant's leisure-time occupations is the rearing of cocoons on mulberry leaves during summer. The ready cocoons are carried to the Silk Factory at Srinagar in huge bags. During winter he and his family may work on rustic looms and weave woollen blankets which fetch a good price. During recent times many peasants have taken to bee-farming by modern methods, dropping the traditional coarse way of collection of honey. He is clever at poultry-farming and eggs and fowls fetch him good money.

A peasant may be the village barber in his leisure, using very coarse and rough razors very dexterously. Or, he may know basket work and may know how to make Kangris—earthen-ware fire-pots used all over Kashmir. Appreciating that the Kashmiri peasant can turn his hands to anything, Sir Fran-

cis Younghusband says: "A Kashmiri can weave good woollen cloth, make first-rate baskets, build himself a house, make his own sandals, his own ropes and a good bargain".

The peasant woman is an expert at the spinning wheel. She hums sweet tunes to kill the monotony of the job. She skilfully makes slippers, mats, etc. out of the grass ropes that she weaves. She pounds paddy into rice at the rustic mortar and that also keeps her fit.

Village handicrafts of Kashmir were not deliberately destroyed like those of the rest of India, but they met a setback owing to certain economic and other trends. For instance, shawl-making lost its thriving market when Franco-Prussian War broke out in the last century in Europe. Thanks to the progressive policy of His Highness' Government and the impetus provided to the cottage industries of Kashmir by the annual Exhibition held at Srinagar in September, village handicrafts have largely revived.

There is an imperative need to properly guide, encourage and foster the artistic tendency in the village youth, so that their energies can be harnessed towards their social security which can be guaranteed when they turn their attention to more cottage industries than they do now. Indeed cottage industry in Kashmir, if properly guided, has a great future before it.

THE MIGRATORY PEASANT

Summer birds, actual or human, visit the "sweetheart of the world" over the mountain passes in spring, enjoy the summer of the valley in its cool high altitudes, on grassy meadows, by the side of mountain lakes, where wild flowers abound and where the turf is covered with the sweet-smelling pine-needles, and then, at the first hint of autumn and cold, they flock back

to the plains of India. But Kashmir has its indigenous migratory bird in the poor Kashmiri landless peasant.

Many of these peasants flock down to the plains during late autumn in search of labour. They are contemptuously termed Hato in the Punjab and N.W.F. Province, where their cheap labour renders them cheap in the eyes of their employers.

When these peasants migrate to the plains, they form groups. Like typical Kashmiris they are cheerful even under the strain of the journey on either of the long mountain routes, that of Jhelum Valley or the one over Banihal Pass. Stopping by the roadside to pass the night, they throw down their miserable freight of earthen pots and cups, torn quilts, and faggots to light the fire with. When the fire is lit and the rice merrily steams in the dirty pots of baked clay, they cluster round the humble fires and sing happy chorus songs, forgetting their cares and their precarious future for the time being. Most of them, thanks to the climate of Kashmir which more than compensates their lack of nutrition, their tanned, weather-beaten, furrowed cheeks are yet a glow with ruddy health. Hard labour in the plains will soon damage their fine physique.

I have met many parties of these migratory peasants on their journey when they encamped by the roadside near the Banihal Pass or somewhere over the Jhelum Valley Road. Their tale of woe will melt even a callous heart. Living in one-roomed tenements and subsisting on the barest necessities of food, clothing, etc. they fall easy victims to malaria in the plains.

Sitting by a fireplace in their scattered, open air camp, my bourgeois appearance caused an agreeable surprise to the group. I conversed with one young, communicable sort of peasant, whose pale, haggard face showed recent devastation of malaria.

"I once had an attack of cholera", he told me in his rustic Kashmiri manner, with the peculiar accent of his Tehsil, "but I stood it. I got this fever-disease while I was working in a mill at Amritsar. The wayside quack robbed me of much of my hard-saved money. This shivering fever has almost crippled me. My cousin, a fine young man, by the name of Allah, went to paradise as a result of this disease. Here is his quilt" showing me a clumsy apology for one—"that I shall return to his mother."

"Did you save some money?" I asked him sympathetically.

"Yes, I brought some things", he said, wistfully, showing me his proud freight "a quilt for my mother, trinkets for my wife, a rug for my father, salt and tea for the family. Before the month of Ramzan I saved ten rupees which I sent home as land revenue was to be paid for the small holding that we have."

"Have others saved like you?"

"No, I am young and I was quite stout when I left Kashmir I could work even in the fever." "There is", he added, beckoning another miserable camp-mate "Fata coming back to his home with no money or things for the home. We have contributed for his journey expenses and he is thankful that he is after all returning to his mother Kashmir. He says he will never step beyond the borders of his village even if he starves."

Many of these migratory peasants who have not saved sufficient money to finance their meagre necessities at home and the journey back to Kashmir, have had perforce to remain in the plains, to be reduced to skeletons by the ravages of malaria in the oppressive summer heat to which their physical make-up is least suited. Observant and compassionate, I have looked at scores of these parties on their return journey. Wearing tattered dirty clothes and skull caps, clumsily patched up at manifold

places, bare-footed, ill-shapen, swollen toes protruding out of scratched and rugged feet, that are large and square, they present a pathetic sight to the sympathetic on-looker.

Is this what man has made of man? Should the supposedly fortunate dwellers of the fertile land, the vale of beauties, the paradise of earth, be thus constrained by force of stern economic circumstances to migrate to mills and markets of the plains, where their labour is thanklessly and contemptuously exploited?

SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS

In rural Kashmir, due to the force of superstition and of religion, social customs, both local and provincial, have almost attained the force of law.

Hindus and Muslims living in villages have many customs in common. One is their reverence for sacred places. Both are so-called Pir-Parast—reverential to Pirs, the holy men, be they Hindus or Muslims.

There are many shrines of these holy men of the past which are scared to both. Their dress villages where the civilising influences of the modern type of Indian dress have not yet penetrated.

There are minor differences in dress, however. The Pheran of the Panditain is more gaudy than that of her Muslim sister. Her head-dress, Taranga, is more picturesque than the Kasoba, the headdress of the Muslim woman. Before marriage it is customary for girls of both communities to wear skull caps which are sometimes worked with lace. Taranga or Kasaba is covered by a cloth, which is pinned at its top and which hangs back to cover the pendant tresses whose plains are woven into coarse, rustic tassels.

Many of the common customs of villagers spring from religion. There are, however, for the Hindu, definite rites connected with birth, marriage and death. But both Hindu and Muslim women sing almost the same Kashmiri folksongs at these occasions.

Every household in the village has its wooden or stone mortar, wherein, with long and heavy wooden pestles, women, singing or humming folk-tunes, pound paddy. Women generally lead a free and equal life among the Muslims. No village woman uses the *Purdah* except the brides, called *Maharanis* for the nuptial day, for some time, as a token of maidenly modesty and of course, as a custom.

There is actually an elaborate code of local social customs but it is needless to go into so many of them. What is more relevant and also, more interesting, is superstition, which is universal in the villages of Kashmir and is linked up with religion on the one hand and with custom, on the other, thus holding an undisputed traditional sway over the credulous mind of the villager moved as he by inherited and primitive emotions. In an atmosphere of appalling illiteracy and helpless ignorance, it is but natural that superstition should powerfully affect the lives of the villagers.

The itinerant *Pirs*, *Faqirs* and other so-called holy men put on spiritual airs and sell charms to the believing villagers to protect their children, women and cattle from the evil eye. The *Pir* or *Pandit* writes some *Qoranic* or *Sanskrit* verse on a piece of paper or inscribes a few hieroglyphic, magic-square letters upon a copper plate and passing a sacred breath over it, after a fit of assumed meditation, hands it over to the taken-in peasant. It is then sewn up in black cloth and tied round the neck. No reformer raises his voice against this "amulet selling" trade—lest the feared cry of 'religion in danger' should rise against him as the reaction. These amulet sellers are even believed to cure chronic diseases and they prescribe accordingly.

The Kashmiri Pandit villager is much more superstitious than the Muslim. He attaches ominous significance to sneezes, to night hooting of the owl on the roof of his house, to the sage oracles of his astrologer—Pandit and so on.

The Muslim villager does not mind sneezes, but he has a traditional fear of grave-yards. He believes in Rah-Chowk, his Will-o'-the-wisp. Once, in a starry summer night, I was listening to folk-songs sung by Satara and some of his family. We were seated in a small lawn flanking the cool Sind tributary. When, after several songs, there was, as usual, a pause and some attempt at lively conversation, Ahmdoo related an adventure that he had with Rah-Chowk.

"Believe me, I actually saw a Rah-Chowk when I was returning from Shadipora, late in the night, last year. It was summer. My horse saw the bridle path in the light of the stars. At a corner of the path, where this stream curves into the Jhelum, I saw the damned devil, who kills by treachery by dragging one into a marsh or a river. His two eyes glowed in the dark. The flames of the pot of fire on his head danced up. His devilish presence lit the Jhelum which appeared like a big road.

"Naturally I forgot my direction and I was about to steer my horse that way. But—thank Allah—the horse has his iron shoes. He understands the devil. He did not take by direction but, pricking up his ears, he galloped on the dark, bridle path and brought me safe home."

The still, dark night, the silent audience and Ahmdoo's simple but dramatic utterance produced a suspension of disbelief even in me for the moment. Presently I explained to them the phenomenon of phosphorescence in as many Kashmiri words as I could, but that left them unconvinced and of the same opinion still.

ON VILLAGE MARRIAGES

As mentioned at the outset, rural kashmir is predominantly populated by Muslims. Hindus are sparsely scattered in decimal proportions. One of the reasons of the dense population of Muslims in Kashmir, apart from historical factors, is their system of marriages. Kashmiri Muslims allow consanguine marriages. In fact many kinds of secular marriages are in vogue. The right to divorce is free to either party though divorces are not very common.

"Is this boy your son?" I asked Qadir, the head peasant of the land whose idle and absentee landlord I happen to be. I made out that the boy bore little family resemblance to Qadir but still I ventured the question just to break the monotony of our conversation about the produce of my land, a dull subject to me, as year after year, I have to hear the same story of damages by rats, spoilation of the crop by too much rainfall, thefts during harvest, and so on.

"No", said Qadir—the traditional 'sir' is dropped in this village as 'light' has come—"but he is my son now."

"How, what do you mean by that?" The object of the question—the boy—bashfully looked away from us towards the kitchen.

"I have one daughter", pointing towards the kitchen, wherefrom the girl gave me a bold glance, "she is the only hope that I have. She—may God give you long life—has been married to a boy who could be spared by his family. He—may Allah help you—is the sixth son of his parents. And now he is, he added blinking, "both my son and son-in-law".

A peasant marriage is a picturesque occasion. The women, wearing red and blue Pherans—Kashmiri gowns—sing marriage folk-songs for the Manzrath, the night when henna is

rubbed on the bands and feet of the bride and the groom, the day of marriage, when the bride leaves her father's house and when the groom takes her away.

The marriage procession is a sight to see. Village bands, the musicians playing on ancient wooden pipes and rough drums, lead the small picturesque procession. The bridegroom, dressed in his best, is seated on an ambling pony, whose saddle is covered with gay clothes which are reserved for the occasion. Uneasily saddled, he tries his very best to look important.

The bridegrooms's father can be easily made out from his busy, flustering gestures. Peasant women, brightly dressed and wearing happy smiles, with interlocked hands and catching each other's waist, form the rear of the procession. They sing folk-songs that suit the occasion comparing the bridegroom to Majnun, or Rustum, or Khusro, and the bride to Laila or Shirin or a hyacinth. Their recitation is free as it is full-throated. They are not shy because they live in social environments which make them the equal of man in every respect. The combined sound of the rustic music and the marriage songs form a strange choir.

Against this happy marital atmosphere, let us pause and have a look at the lot of Kashmiri Pandit Hindus who live as a small part of the population in some villages.

I can't resist the temptation of going back to Shambu of Vachi. When I first went to his house and saw a small, rather dirtily-clad woman who dishevelled hair and graceful ankles, I naturally but hastily took her to be the wife of Shambu.

"Is she your Mem Sahib?" I said in my usual, gay manner to Shambu, after she had poured Kashmiri tea in my cup for a big Samovar, the Kashmiri tea kettle which is a miniature of the Russian Samovar.

"Oh, no, she is his wife," replied Shambu, pointing to the near-by room, where his brother sat, conversing with some peasants who were partly clearing debt arrears.

"Oh! but isn't he your f....., I mean your uncle?" I said, as I had taken the old gentleman to be Shambu's father.

"He is my brother. He is the eldest. We are four brothers. We had a sister who was married to a Patwari, whose sister was my brother's first wife. The present one is his third wife...."

Shambu talked on but I heard no more as I was lost in a pensive reflectiveness on the fate of the small young lady married to a senile hag, who could conveniently manage to launch on matrimony for the third time, while his three brothers led unhappy, single lives. According to the Bible (in spite of the example of Jesus and his disciples!) "it is not good form to live alone",, but here it is the accepted form for most Hindu youngmen to live as forced bachelors.

During my stay in the village I learnt that only one of the village Hindu daughters was married to a village boy—the son of a middle class landlord—while all the others were packed off to the distant city of Srinagar, where they were married mostly as second or third wives to old money bags of Kashmiri Pandits. Only a few fortunate young village Pandits are married. All the rest are unmarried. Girls are not to be seen anywhere. Of course, the widows, returned from the city, are there. The kind of social morale arising in such surroundings can better be imagined than exposed with a crusader's zeal.

What has happened to the ancient Hindu law of Manu? What has not vicious customs and hide-bound usage done to corrupt it?

FUTURE

Social customs of the villagers will undergo a sea change as superstitions and anachronisms of custom will die a natural death with the spread of literacy and education in the villages. That done, an era of change will be heralded. That era will surely and steadily precede the making of a better and an uplifted rural Kashmir.

Kashmiri villagers to be progressive need to be something more than "excellent cultivators"; they should not be flattered with that imperialist epithet used by Sir Walter Lawrence, as they have yet to learn how to lead hygienic, sanitary and clean lives. Their leisure, during the long winter of Kashmir, is not fully utilised to their individual and national good. There is very great scope for rural reform. Village Uplift Movement, as sponsored by the Government, should march with the progress of the time and should, co-opting public bodies and organisations, spread its nation-building activities to the cornermost foot-hill hamlet in Kashmir to carve out a great future for Rural Kashmir, when the Kashmiri villager will lead a better, more prosperous and a higher type of life.

(1945)

CHAPTER 20

SNAKE WORSHIP IN KASHMIR

By

H.H. Wilson

We have frequent occasion to notice the important figure which snakes and snake deities make in the worship and traditionary history of Kashmir. The extent and permanence of the superstition we may learn from Abul Fazl who observes, that in seven hundred places there are carved figures of snakes, which they worship. (*Ain-i-Akbari* ii. p.148.) His statement is in fact taken from the text of *Punya Bhatta*; for its being as old as the age of Alexander, we have what may be regarded as sufficient, though indirect testimony; for *Onesicritus*, as quoted by *Srabo*, avers, that *Abisaras*, who we shall hereafter see is a misnomer for Kashmir, or a part of it, is said by his ambassadors to cherish two enormous dragons, *par ho duo drakontoos apengellon hoi par' hautou pr' esbeis tr' epesthaiton men hogdoekonta pekhon, ton de tettarakonta, pros tois hekaton, hos eireken O'nesikritos*.

Apud quem, *Abisarum*, legati ab eo missi, nunciaverunt, duos dracones nutrir, alterum octoginta cubitorum longitudine, alterum centum et quadriginta, ut *Onesicritus* refert. The Oxford editor judiciously observes on this passage: "Serpentes in India nonnulli pedes 30 longitudine aequant; nulli autem superant. Quo circa haec legatorum relatio, ad cultum Idolatricum referre videtur, nam Idola esse magnitudinis vere mirabilis, in templis Indorum constat. Exinde Dracones esse ingentes figuras in templis suspicor, et legati vel vivos existire finxerunt, vel

Macedones eorum Linguam minus intellexerunt.—Page 994 and note. R.P. Knight, in his "Inquiry into the Symbolical language of Ancient Art and Mythology," (Classical Journal, vol. xxiii. p.14) states upon the authority of Maximin of Tyre, that when Alexander entered India, "Taxillus, a powerful prince, of the country" was the raja of "Takshasilas) "showed him a serpent of enormous size, which he nourished with great care, and revered as the image of the God whom the Greek writers from the similitude of his attributes called Dionysus or Bacchus." Whether the Kashmirian worship of snakes was mystical, at least in the earliest ages, may be questioned. There is likewise reason to suppose that this worship was diffused throughout the whole of India, as besides the numerous fables and traditions relating to the Nagas or snake gods, scattered through the Puranas, vestiges of it still remain in the actual observances of the Hindus. It seems not improbable that the destruction of the whole serpent race by Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit, recorded in the Puranas as a historical fact, may in reality imply the subversion of the local and original superstition, and the erection of the system of the Vedas upon its ruins.

CHAPTER 21

CONVOCATION ADDRESS, SRI PRATAP COLLEGE, SRINAGAR *July 5, 1940*

By

Tej Bahadur Sapru

Mr. Principal, Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I came here a month and a half ago as a refugee from the heat of my town I did not at all anticipate that I would be called upon to deliver a Convocation address at this college. The insistent request of your persuasive Director of Education has, however, proved impossible to resist. My first duty on the present occasion is to thank you warmly for the kindness which has prompted you in inviting me to address you this evening. There are more ties than one which unite me to Kashmir; but my lot has been cast in another part of the country, and much as I admire the grandeur and natural scenery of this ancient and venerable part of India and its bracing climate, I feel that I know so little about it that it would be presumptuous on my part to give you any advice on local politics in which you are, no doubt, deeply interested. Remembering also, as I do, that I am standing on the platform of an educational institution, I am most unwilling to disturb the equanimity of its academic life by introducing in my address any jarring notes of political controversy. Nevertheless, it seems to me that it would be carrying academic detachment too far to avoid altogether any reference to the cataclysmic events, which

are taking place almost every minute in Europe and other parts of the world. We have during the last two months witnessed events which we should have refused to believe as being possible if they had not actually happened. Country after country has fallen a victim to brute force. Who could have thought that intellectually advanced, inoffensive and peace-loving countries like Norway, Denmark, Holland, and Belgium would, almost in the twinkling of an eye, be robbed of their freedom and of their independent existence? Above all who could have thought that France, the mother of culture and elegance, the champion of freedom, the country where humanity learnt in modern times its first lessons in liberty, equality and fraternity, would today have to sue for peace at the hands of those to whom the very mention of democracy is abomination, whose cult is race-superiority and whose ambition is world domination? As I am dictating this address, I feel that I may be out of date when I deliver it. Things may happen by that time which, even with our experience of the last two months, we dare not imagine today.

The modern man in his vanity and pride of progress, scientific and political, is accustomed to point the finger of scorn at the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages and we have been taught from our childhood to condemn Chengiz Khan; Hulaku, Atilla and Tamurlane as barbarians who were the scourge of humanity, but I venture to think that at least this much may be said in their favour that they could not fairly be charged with being untrue to the civilization and culture of their day. You have now nations which boast of the accumulated knowledge and culture of the last 400 years and particularly of the 19th and the 20th centuries, of the triumphs of science, of their advance in chemistry and physics, in engineering and mechanical skill, of their conquest of air and water, of their political science and international law, of democracy, national Socialism, Fascism, Communism, and sensitive nationalism. You have in our age nations who go into other countries as missionaries of civilisation, justice and progress and claim to be trustees for

those less happily circumstanced that they are. You have also nations who claim to be super-men, who have worked themselves into the belief that Providence has created them to rule over others and to impose their will upon all others. You have at present nations whose material resources defy arithmetical figures. On the other hand you have also others to whom physical existence is a long-drawn-out and bleak struggle. I hope I have not overdrawn the picture but I am only anxious to put you on your guard against the facile assumption that because we are twentieth century men, because we have conquered distance, because we can, sitting in our own rooms, hear human voices across the wide expanse of seas, humanity has been drawn together or that the brotherhood of man and the Federation of the world of which Tennyson dreamt nearly 80 years ago, has become an accomplished fact. If the present war, unlike the last, can lead to a revision of human values, if it can humble the pride and arrogance of those who have prostituted science so that they and they alone may impose their will on others, if it can succeed in giving us a truer idea of "internationalism" and a truer conception of national sovereignty, then the blood of millions which has redened such large spaces of the globe will not have been shed in vain. After the last war we heard a great deal of the 14 points of President Wilson, then came the treaty of Versailles, which is not assailed by many and supported by some, and we were called upon to rejoice in the establishment of the League of Nations.

Whether the League has turned out to be the shrine of human hopes, which it was anticipated to be, or their sepulchre is a question into which I shall not go, but if one may pry into the future while yet this titanic struggle is going on, only two alternatives seem to be possible; either the world or most of it will go under the heel of one or two Powers of the West, which will acquire complete mastery over our lives, in which the individual will count for nothing and the State for everything, in which the will of the men at the top will be treated as the will of the nation under their control, or the world will evolve a sys-

tem of union or federation in which national sovereignties will have to shed many of their inherited and cherished conceptions of national freedom in matters of defence, tariffs, fiscal and monetary arrangements, in which they will pool their resources, suppress their commercial, and political jealousies and rivalries and replace their present day monopolistic and exclusive tendencies by mutual co-operation, guarded and secured not by the exposition of alluring theories of this is or that but by effective sanctions. Whether statesmen will at the stage be guided by ethical motives to bring peace and tranquillity to suffering humanity, whether even after their bitter experience of the last 25 years they will continue to think, each in terms of exclusive national interests, and whether Europe will still continue to claim for itself a position of supremacy over Asia and other parts of the world, or whether considerations of justice for all alike will, then, sway the conduct of those who will be charged with the responsibility of taking supreme decisions, are questions which one may approach hopefully, but about which no one can say any thing with certainty. The future lies on the knee of the gods.

Meanwhile the immediate question which concerns us and ought to absorb all our attention is the safety and security of our country. We have been repeatedly told by some of our distinguished public men that it is absurd to think of a foreign invasion of India and that those who think of it or talk of it probably do not believe in the strength of the country. If it is merely a question of hope and wish, I sincerely join that hope and wish that the country may never suffer the fate of some other harmless countries in the West, but no wise man can shut his eyes to the growing ambition of some of the aggressive countries or refuse to prepare himself to meet a possible and by no means a remote danger. Unfortunately, it is a fact too patent to be ignored that that unity in which lies strength is at the present moment conspicuous by its absence in our country. I do not wish in the slightest degree to ignore or minimise the strength or the depth of the convictions of those who are oc-

cupying the political stage today, but if each party stands out for its own convictions and its own programme and refuses, to join hands with the others merely because they hold equally strongly views to the contrary, what chance can there be for that strength-giving unity without which there is bound to be a serious danger to our security? I should have thought that on a supreme occasion like this the highest considerations of patriotism would induce us all to put country first and party next in our thoughts and actions. I am not saying or suggesting that when the time comes for us to determine the fundamentals of our constitution, party convictions or party loyalties should be surrendered, but what I am saying is that at the present moment the one common platform on which we can meet irrespective of different political or economic creeds or labels is the safety and security of the country. Nor can we on an occasion like this refuse to co-operate with or assist the British whatever the nature or extent of our grievances against them may be.

I share the disappointment of those of my countrymen who feel that the British have already delayed too long the assigning to India her proper place, and have withheld from her that freedom and those powers which are enjoyed by the other units of the Commonwealth; but I can discern distinct signs of a change for the better in the attitude of Britain vis a vis India. If the war has already had some lessons for us, it has also had some others for them. There is no man who has more deeply regretted than myself that a country of the size and population of India should have been left all these years with such inadequate means of defence and self-protection and that pleas should have been put forward in the past in support of such policy which, to my mind, were wholly unjustifiable, I am, therefore, glad that the dangers of the situation have shaken British immobility on the question of Indian defence. I note with satisfaction that measures are being taken now for raising a new Indian army, officered largely by men holding the King's Commission, but I shall be untrue to my conviction if I were to

say that I am satisfied either with the adequacy or the extent of the steps proposed to be taken. The need is urgent for a much larger expansion of effort in the matter of recruiting and training of our men in large numbers. So also is the need to increase the industrial output for the necessary equipment for every arm of the defence services. If I ask for mutual co-operation among ourselves, I also press that the time has come when a greater spirit of trust between the British and the Indians should prevail and dominate all our effort to meet the challenge of the common foe and to insure the safety of this country. What the future may have in store for us is a question on which no one can dogmatise, but the repeated statements of British statesmen, and particularly the recent speech of Mr. Amery, may well be treated as foreshadowing the direction in which events are moving. Perhaps we are much nearer the day than we imagine when we may be called upon to shoulder our responsibilities in fullest measure, and no one who has the larger and permanent interest of the country at heart can but sincerely hope and pray that we may develop even at this stage that strength and that spirit of mutual confidence without which I venture to think we would not be able to discharge our responsibilities and to rise equal to the opportunities that may open to us.

Having said this much about the present situation let me now come to some other matters which are of a more agreeable character. You worthy Director of Education, Mr. K.G. Saiyidain, has been good enough to furnish me with a copy of the report of the Educational Reorganisation Committee, 1939, and also a copy of the Annual Administration Report of the Education Department. I can not claim to be an educational expert though my interest in education has been practically lifelong. I shall, therefore, not venture to express any considered opinion on the recommendations of the Reorganisation Committee. Nearly five years ago I was called upon in my own Province to investigate the problem of unemployment among the educated classes and in the course of my work as chairman of that committee I had to study the problem of education in its

various aspects not only in my Province but also in some countries of Europe, which I visited again at that time. So far as secondary education and primary education are concerned, I came very much to the same conclusion as your committee has done. I am glad to notice that they have in their report expressed the opinion that "the present syllabus is too bookish and academic, too far removed from the realities realities of the socio-economic situation and unrelated to the child's native interests and psychology. Its various branches are unrelated to one another and, therefore, likely to have a distracting effect on the child's mind. In order to remove these defects, we recommend that education in basic schools should be an 'integral' progress of child development centering round the pupil's physical environment, his social environment and some form of craft work, which will provide room for his creative self-expression and also have social and productive value."

I need scarcely say that these views seem to me to be thoroughly sound, though I realise that in their practical application there is room for difference of opinion as to the amount of emphasis which may be laid on actual craft work. In any case it seems to me that if by craft teaching in schools it is intended to secure "the co-ordination of manual and mental activity and the training of practical aptitude and initiative," I am in agreement with it. It is in regard to secondary education, however, that we have got to face some serious problems. In my opinion secondary education should mark a distinct stage in the education of our boys and should not be treated merely as a bridge to university education. I hold that a boy, who has finished his secondary education, should have received an education which should enable him, if he so minded, to start on a bread-winning career. Secondary education must, therefore, aim at equipping him among other things to face the struggle of life. If, on the other hand, he has the urge for further or advanced knowledge in any particular subjects, which appeal to him, I would not only not stand in his way but encourage him in the pursuit of that knowledge in these subjects. It seems to

me that university education has unfortunately suffered a great deal because our young men feel that the possession of an academic degree is a passport to Government 'jobs'. The number of students, who are prompted to join our universities by the pure and noble motive to acquire knowledge or do so out of their devotion to culture, is nearly everywhere limited, and students, who crowd our universities with interested motives, do not, in my opinion make any contribution to the growth of our national culture and not unoften fail to do credit to their Alma Mater. I find from the annual report that the number of students at the college at Jammu was 595 while the number of students at this college was 1380 in the year with which the report deals. I wonder how many of these students, after graduating at the university, are going to devote themselves to the advancement of knowledge and culture.

I have a shrewd suspicion that here, as in the rest of the country, nearly 95 per cent of these young men must be hankering after jobs in Government service. I keenly realise their difficulties. I deeply sympathise with their feeling of disappointment which must embitter them when they find that their best hopes are dashed to the ground in the actual struggle of life. It is, however, necessary that they should realise that no government—either foreign or indigenous—can possibly provide jobs year after year for the ever growing number of graduates. So far as learned professions are concerned the two professions which attract our students most are Law and Medicine. As regards the legal profession I can speak with personal knowledge and experience. The saturation point has already been reached in that profession. This does not, however, mean that I am discouraging our promising young men from joining the legal profession, but it is as well that I should give a warning. First and foremost let me say with brutal frankness that the standards of legal education in several of our universities leave much to be desired. Legal education does not mean and ought not to mean a passing acquaintance with the dry-as-dust statutes of your legislature, or with a mechanical

knowledge of some elementary books of jurisprudence, equity, torts, and things of that kind. Legal education will never improve in India unless it is distinctly realised by men, who are responsible for it, that law, which permeates nearly every aspect of human life, is an organic science directly connected with the social and economic life of the country, and in many instances, with the social and economic life of other countries. On the one hand law is intimately connected with the religion, philosophy and history of a country; on the other it can not divorce itself from its political institutions and economic structure, which vary from time to time. A person, therefore, who desires to study law must have a fairly good stock of knowledge of other subjects than law. In short he must be a person with some cultural interests and also some practical knowledge of the affairs of life.

If you will study the lives of some of the most eminent lawyers of this country and particularly of some of the lawyers in England, France, and the United States, you will find that their interests have been very varied, their stock of knowledge very comprehensive and their own contribution to culture has been by no means insignificant. Quite apart from the intellectual and cultural side of law let me give a warning to our young men that if they wish seriously to pursue the legal profession and maintain its high traditions, they must be prepared to wait for long—the instances of young men achieving rapid success are few and far between—before success is in sight. An appreciable number of your young men go for legal education to Allahabad, Lucknow, Delhi and Lahore and I assume that after they have taken the degree they join the profession in the State. I have noticed with regret that there is no provision for legal education in your colleges and I respectfully suggest that in the interests of the profession and of your courts and above all in the interests of your people provision for legal education should be made in this State. The establishment of a medical college is perhaps a much more expensive matter and I do not know whether in these difficult times the finances of the

State can be subjected to further strain. In regard to the medical profession in my Province, I can say that it has not escaped the blasting effects to unemployment; but during the course of my investigation I found that there was a tendency among young medical graduates to congregate in big centres where there are, already medical men with well established practices and that they are generally speaking, reluctant to go to smaller towns and particularly rural areas where, subsidised by government, they may not only earn a living for themselves, but do a great deal of good to the rural population.

I refrain from expressing any opinion on this question so far as your State is concerned as I do not possess the necessary amount of local knowledge, but I venture to think that in the case of your young medical men the prospects should be distinctly better if they were to settle down in centres of rural areas and small towns even though the material gain may not be as great as in the two capitals or other big towns of the State. I know that your two colleges are described as Arts Colleges, but if I may take the liberty of expressing an opinion as to the further expansion of higher education in the State I would suggest that probably an expansion of scientific education in branches, such as, Mining, Metallurgy, Botany, Zoology, Forestry, etc., should, from a practical point of view, be found to be more advantageous both to the youth and the State itself. I do not say that my suggestion should be carried out immediately, but I do suggest that that objective should be kept constantly in view and a programme of expansion in these and similar subjects spread over a series of years might be prepared.

I would now take the liberty of referring to a question in which I have taken deep interest and which, I feel, is both politically and economically of the highest importance. While I have said above that no government can provide jobs for the ever increasing number of its educated young men, I also hold that it is neither right nor fair to the youth of the country to provide educational facilities for them and then to leave them

entirely to their own resources. Whether it is a question of finding jobs or settling them in small or big industries, or providing some employment for them, I certainly think that the State must definitely own its responsibility in this matter. This is being done in nearly every country in Europe and, I believe, action has been taken more or less on similar lines, or is under the consideration of some of the provincial Governments in British India. I suggested in the course of my report to the United Provinces Government the formation of an Appointment Board and discussed its functions in one of its chapters. I do not say that it must be the business of the Appointment Board to find jobs for young men, but it should certainly interest itself in young men, maintain a register of the educated unemployed, bring them to the notice of the various departments of the State or private employers, and give them sound advice and guidance in matters affecting their future. It is far better that there should be a well-organised and recognised body of this character than that these unemployed young men should be going from door to door and from man to man asking for recommendations which, in my opinion, is calculated to compromise their self-respect. I, therefore, respectfully suggest the creation of such a body, to those in power here.

Having, dealt with these matters I shall now directly appeal to the young men and young women, who have today been the happy recipients of their degrees. First let me offer you my sincere congratulations on the completion of the first stage in your life and let me express the hope that in the struggle which now awaits you, you may achieve success fortified by the education you have received at the college. But remember it is not merely intellect or the amount of knowledge, that a young man possesses, which can ensure success in life. There are other qualities also which are no less necessary. You must have a clear idea of your aims and objects in life, you must possess inexhaustable perseverance and a capacity to adapt yourself to changing circumstances and above all you must possess an unflinching determination never to swerve from the path of rectitude and

integrity in personal and public matters. you must cultivate the will to conquer such difficulties as may come in your way.

Kashmir has always had a fascination for all outsiders, but people are apt to forget that apart from the rich gifts with which Nature has in her bouny endowed her, apart from her snow- capped hills, its sweet and meandering streams, its reposeful lakes, its gorgeous gardens and soft meadows its luscious fruits, the contribution of the Kashmiris to the culture and philosophy of India, both in Hindu and Mohammedan times, has been such that their descendants may today keep their heads erect. When I talk of culture let me draw your attention to one particular aspect of Kashmir. In the vissicitudes of its history, with all the trials it has had to face, one solid fact of history will always remain outstanding, and that fact is that in Mohamedan times it became in a much more real sense than any other part of India and meeting place of the cultures of the Hindus and the Muslims.

The contribution of Kashmiri Muslims in days gone by to the realms of philosophy, poetry and art is a matter of common knowledge. I wish it were possible for the present generation of their successors to give us a connected account, with true historical perspective, of their contribution. It has been left, however, to an English writer to present to the world even though very partially some thing of the philosophy of Shah Hamadan. Nor let us forget that even today the poetry and philosophy of Sheikh Nur-ud-Din is the common heritage of the Hindus and the Muslims alike in Kashmir. When more than 20 years ago I met at Cambridge the late Professor Edward Brown, whose knowledge of Persian was admitted on all hands to be profound, he added to my pride by saying to me that Ghani was one of the few Indian poets of Persian whose fame had travelled to Persia and whose poetry and mastery of the Persian diction was admitted even there. The Mughal gardens, which attract even today such large crowds of sight-seers and which, I am glad, are looked after with such tender care by the

Government of His Highness, still remind one of Jahangir's passionate love for Kashmir. In the sphere of art Kashmir still can claim a position all its own throughout the length and breadth of the country. Coming to our own times can we forget that Kashmir was the home of origin of the ancestors of that poet-philosopher whose loss we sustained about two years ago? I refer to the late Sir Mohamad Iqbal.

And now may I say a word to the young Kashmiri Pandits and I do so particularly as I am anxious that they should realise that their forefathers and their compatriots in other parts of India owed a great deal to this joint culture. How regrettable it would be if, in these days when unfortunately things that divide the Hindu from the Muslim are more numerous than those that unite them, they were to forget that their ancestors never fought shy of the common culture! Who that knows anything about Kashmir can forget the contribution to philosophy, culture and poetry which was made in days gone-by by the Pandits of Kashmir? Nor let us forget that you have produced at least two great women whose philosophy and poetry may still inspire their descendants with pride. It is true the Hindus preserved their own philosophy and their own culture, but it is also true that they did not turn their face away from the culture of the new comers or the members of the new faith. Who does not know that in Northern India, at any rate, it was the Kashmiri pandit who summed up in himself the best that there was to be found both in Hindu and Muslim cultures? It was his proficiency in Persian that secured for him a distinct position in the bureaucracy of the Mughal times, and I say this with confidence when I remember the history of those of our ancestors, who were compelled by circumstances, to migrate from Kashmir and to seek their fortune in what is now British India. They carried with them their keen intellect, their remarkable sense of adaptability and their character into a larger and competitive world, and so long as Persian was the official language at the courts of Delhi and Lucknow, the Kashmiri Pandit shared with the Kayesth some of the highest offices in Mughal times. But it

is not merely as an official that the Kashmiri Pandit figured in Lahore, Delhi and Lucknow. His position as a man of culture and letters was distinct and was acknowledged by Muslim Rulers. When Persian was ousted by Urdu, it did not take the Kashmiri Pandit much time to make his mark on the altered situation.

I could give you, if time permitted, the names of a number of Kashmiri Pandits, in what is now British India, who made their mark as writers or poets in Persian and Urdu. Who has not heard of the great Rai Rayan Anand Ram Mukhlis, who not only occupied some of the highest positions in the Mughal Empire, but also wrote a very valuable history of the Mughal dynasty? Who has not heard of the name of Pandit Daya Shankar Nasim, the immortal author of *Gulzar-i-Nasim*? Where is the Indian who will challenge today the poetic fame of my late lamented friend Brij Narain Chakbast of Lucknow and who does not know that one of the founders of Urdu fiction was a Kashmiri Pandit, the never-to-be forgotten Ratan Nath Dar? I could multiply instances but I refrain. Let me not overlook the names of diplomats and travellers like Pandit, afterwards Mirza, Mohan Lal; of judges like Pandit Shambhu Nath, the first Indian to take his seat in the Calcutta High Court; of lawyers and leaders of public opinion, like the late Pandit Ajudhia Nath, the late Pandit Bishamber Nath, the late Pandit Bishan Narian Dar, the late Pandit Printhi Nath Chak, Jaget Narain Malla, Sheo Narain Shomem, and last but not the least, the late Pandit Moti Lal Nehru and of numerous administrators in Ranjit Singh's Empire and Indian States at present. To the Kashmiri Pandit young men I cannot hold out better examples than these and I hope and pray that the examples of these men may inspire them not only in the achievement of personal success but in the service of their motherland. I have a personal appeal to make to you and that is that while as Hindus you may not forget your own philosophy or the rich treasures of culture which you have inherited from your ancestors, you may also continue to cultivate your knowledge of Persian and Urdu.

It will still prove useful to you in Kashmir even if you want to take a utilitarian point of view of knowledge and culture. I should be sorry indeed if a mere communal spirit at any time persuaded you to forget the examples of your ancestors and you treated Urdu as a foreign language. Frankly I think that cultural ties are ever so much stronger than mere political alliances and I should be sorry indeed if the legitimate desire to promote Hindi carried with the necessary implication that you should be unfaithful to Urdu, the strongest bond of union between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Let me now refer to another aspect of our life. I assume that like so many young men in other parts of India you all Hindu and Mohamedans, or at any rate many of you, like to be looked upon as 'Nationalists'. I sincerely hope and trust that this spirit may genuinely grow among you and that it may animate your conduct towards each other. Let me, however, give you a warning. Nationalism ought not to be identified with any particular school of political thought. Nationalism at the present stage of India's development means something essentially different from nationalism in Europe, where, unfortunately from the days of the treaty of Vienna more than one hundred years ago, it has been intimately associated with the idea of territorial sovereignty and has played and is today playing so much havoc. Nationalism in India, as I conceive it, means and should mean not only a habit of thought but also a habit of action, compelling us to think and act in terms of country first, next and last and not to think in terms of caste, community, or creed, so far as the social and economic life of the country is concerned. You cannot forget the heterogeneity of our population and you ought not to overlook the fact that it is the first duty and the last duty of our leaders and their followers to weld these heterogeneous elements into a homogeneous whole, so that in matters of common interest we may work with a united will for the common benefit of all and with justice and fairness to all. Nationalism does not mean the getting of all or the bulk of advantages, social, economic and

political, for your self and denying the same to your neighbour or holding that your own culture or your own religion is better than that of your neighbour. You have to guard yourself against some facile assumptions and misleading slogans, for there can be no greater tyranny exercised over the minds of our young men than the tyranny of certain slogans and catchwords. Lastly, I shall beg you not to assume that nationalism is an accomplished fact. Truly viewed nationalism in its present stage is merely an aspiration, but in order to instal true nationalism amongst us it is necessary that we must make a conscious and concerted effort by fighting separatist tendencies of which, I am afraid, there is far too much evidence in India at the present moment. Young men, I beg you to realise these high ideals on the sacred soil of Kashmir so that success may be yours and it may be said of you that you are serving the best and the highest interests of this ancient land, which poets have compared to Paradise. Paradise I should imagine, does not consist only of wrangling politicians or criers of slogans. There must be at least a reasonable proportion in it of men, who can live there as brothers with common ideals, common aims and common methods of work.

In conclusion I shall express the hope that under the aegis of your Ruler you may make a solid and lasting contribution to the progress of your people in every sphere of life and thus prove yourselves worthy of the education you have received.

CHAPTER 22

KASHMIR'S FIGHT AGAINST DISEASE

The Second Five Year Plan has been very fruitful for the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their struggle against disease. During this period the expenditure on medical services rose from Rs. 54.10 lakhs in 1956-57 to 128-00 lakhs in 1960-61. This increased budgetary provisions during the last five years have enabled the Medical Department to extend its activities both for prevention and cure of disease.

Central Hospitals

In the Central Hospitals the bed strength has been raised from 300 to 500 in the case of Srinagar Hospital and 100 to 250 in the case of Jammu Hospital. All the sections have been provided with modern hospital equipment. The operation theatres, gynaecological sections, Eye and ENT sections of the hospitals have also been equipped adequately. Arrangements for supply of hot water during winter and cold water during summer have also been made in the Central Hospitals. Ward coolers have been provided in Jammu Hospital and theatres have been air-conditioned. In the Central Hospital Srinagar a central heating plant has been functioning for the last three years. Additional services of surgeons, physicians and other doctors have also been arranged in both the Hospitals.

District Hospitals

On the district level the dispensaries have been converted into fulfledged hospitals with 30 beds in each. New buildings

have been put up in Kathua, Udhampur, Rajouri, Anantnag, Baramulla and Ladakh. In all the District Hospitals Anti-Rabic treatment has also been made available. Previously there were only two centres for such treatment attached to the two Central Hospitals and a lot of difficulty was experienced by the people living in far- flung areas. In the District hospitals, X-Ray, Dental Sections and Laboratory facilities have also been provided. This is in addition to the Medical, Surgical and Gynae treatment.

Primary Health Centres

As Tehsil Headquarters, Primary Health Centres are functioning. These Primary Health Centres are immature district hospitals. On the Public Health side, one Sanitary Inspector, a couple of Vaccinators and four Field Workers in each Tehsil work under the immediate control of the Civil Surgeons who function as District Health Officer also. At present we have 33 Primary Health Centres, 20 in Kashmir Province and 13 in Jammu. Out of these 33 Health Centres, 10 Centres of Kashmir Province have been provided with X-Ray, Dental and Laboratory facilities while the remaining 23 are of Central Government pattern. Two Sub-Centre. These Sub- Centres will be under the charge of qualified Midwives. UNICEF has sanctioned aid for five centres in Kashmir and five centres in Jammu. This included Motor Transport, Midwifery Kits, Drugs, Instruments, Hospitals accessories Laboratory and Dental equipment etc.

Primary Health Units

According to the approved programme six Primary Health Units are being opened every year, three in Jammu and three in Kashmir. A Primary Health Unit is an upgraded dispensary which is adequately staffed both for surgical and medical treatment. Each Primary Health Unit has to be provided with a couple of doctors although due to paucity of doctors it has not been possible to provide more doctors in each Primary Health

Unit so far and the work at present is being carried on with only one doctor. In due course of time one more doctor will be added and the needs of local population where such Units are situated will be adequately catered. There are at present 14 Primary Health Units in existence in the State.

Tuberculosis

Side by side with the expansion of medical facilities for general treatment adequate attention has been paid for expansion and improvement of Tuberculosis hospitals and Sanatorias. At present there are two C. D. Hospitals, one in Srinagar and the other in Jammu with a bed strength of 190 and 130 respectively. In the Sanatorias the bed strength is 50 in Batote Sanatorium and 100 in Tangmarg Sanatorium. The bed strength of the T.B. Hospital at Srinagar has been raised from 150 to 190 and in the Jammu C.D. Hospital it has been raised from 50 to 130. Three T.B. Clinics are also functioning in the Kashmir province and two T.B. Clinics in the Jammu Province. These clinics have been provided with X-Ray and Laboratory facilities which have partly been donated by the Central Government. Each clinic is given a central assistance of Rs. 50,000/- in the shape of X-Ray and Laboratory equipment by the Central Government.

Domicillary treatment features very prominently in the treatment of tuberculosis these days and much emphasis is laid on such treatment both by the Central and Provincial Governments. We have also organised domicillary treatment for our T.B. patients both in Jammu and Kashmir.

For re-habilitation of T.B. patients occupational therapists and rehabilitation centres have been organised. The modern trend in treatment of tuberculosis is not only to provide medical facilities but also occupational therapy which is very important for after-care and rehabilitation of T.B. patients.

Public Health

On the public health side a nucleus organisation has been set up with Civil Surgeon as the Public Health Officer of the District and the Deputy Director as Public Health Officer of the Province. It is intended to expand the activities of the preventive organisation during the Third Five Year Plan and provide at least separate Public Health Officers for each district with ancillary staff for looking to the sanitation hygiene and other important matters connected with the Public Health of District. At present the two Epidemiologists control the vaccination staff under the immediate charge of the Deputy Director of Health Services. We have two Epidemic Departments one in the Kashmir Province and the other in the Jammu Province who are looking after the smallpox vaccination and or also responsible for running of certain organisations such as Anti-Typhus Organisation in Kashmir and Malaria Eradication Programme in Jammu. The B. C.G. and Anti- Venereal Disease Organisation are also a part of the Public- Health Activities of the Department.

Smallpox eradication programme was launched in this State like other States in India during the year 1960-61. To begin with Pilot Project Survey Scheme has been started in the Districts of Srinagar and Anantnag.

The following table shows the work done by Public Health Organisations in the State:-

The B.C.G. Organisation functions for the prevention of Tuberculosis in the State.

The Anti Malaria Organisation which was functioning as a control programme previously has now now been converted into an eradication programme on the central pattern. The re-organised set up has now been in progress for the last over a year. Additional staff, motor transport and other essential items

have been provided for this Organisation both at the State expense as well as by means of contributions from the Central Government. One more Unit has started functioning with effect from July. 1960. The Central Government has already provided motor transport, equipment and other essential commodities for this organisation. This will enable the Department to cover the uncovered areas of Ramnagar, Basohli, Ramban and Bhaderwah Tehsils. The Malaria has to be eradicated as a whole and no part where the incidence is high to be neglected. A proper surveillance programme is also being worked out to guard against growth of mosquitoes. The surveillance programme will be carried out from the beginning of the year 1961-62.

Typhus has completely been eradicated from the Province of Kashmir where it used to take a heavy toll of human life previously. There are only stray cases now which are being controlled by the State Epidemic Department under whose auspices the Anti Typhus Organisation is functioning. Six Anti Typhus Centres are in commission in the Kashmir Valley.

Family Planning Centres

In order to check the indiscriminate growth of population there are 9 Family Planning Centres functioning in the two Central Hospitals and 7 District Hospitals. In the Family Planning centres, advice and treatment is provided for parents who want to check the expansion of their families. One more Family Planning Centre has been established in the city of Srinagar at Rattan Rani Hospital, with Central assistance. A Family Planning Board has also been constituted under the Chairmanship of the Hon'ble Health Minister.

Medical College

A Medical College was established in the year 1959-60 with a seating capacity for 75 students. This College has today 66 students on its rolls in the second year of M.B.B.S. Class and

112 students in the first year. Prior to its establishment the State was undergoing a heavy expense in deputing 40 to 50 candidates annually to other Medical Colleges in India and grant heavy loans to them which amounted to 10 to 15 thousands per candidate. A new building is being put up for the Medical College in the premises of SMHS Hospital. At present the College is located in the old Hospital building which has been reconditioned at a cost of about 6 lacs. As a result of the establishment of this College within a very short time the State will be in a position to provide doctors for the existing dispensaries numbering over 40 which are run without doctors but will also be in a position to open new Allopathic dispensaries in various distant corners of the State. The total number of dispensaries at present on the Allopathic side in the State is 160.

Trainees

For ancillary medical personnel there are two training centres attached to the Central Hospitals where Compounders, Nurses, Midwives, Dental, Laboratory and X-Ray Technicians. Sanitary Inspectors and Nursing Orderlies etc. are trained. In the two Centres there is a capacity of 40 Compounders, 40 Nurses, 24 Laboratory, X-Ray and Dental Technicians, 20 Sanitary Inspectors, 20 Midwives and 30 Nursing Orderlies who are trained annually in these institutions. To provide an incentive, stipends at the rate of Rs. 30 per candidate are given to male candidates and Rs. 50 for women candidates for training in Nursing courses.

Health Visitors Training School

For staffing of Primary Health Centres, Family Planning Clinics, M.C.H. and Maternity Centres the services of Lady Health Visitors are very badly needed. There was no institution in this State for training of this class of personnel. A lady Health Visitors Training School is now functioning in Srinagar with a seating capacity of 10 to 15 candidates per year. We re-

quire more than 150 Lady Health Visitors for staffing of above mentioned institutions. We cannot make any headway in establishing M.C.H. and Maternity Centres for want of qualified Lady Health Visitors. Although 50 M.C.H. Centres were provided in the 2nd Five Year plan but the scheme could not be executed.

Isolation Hospitals

. One Isolation Hospital at Jammu has been established during the Second Five Year Plan. The Isolation Hospital at Srinagar which is already functioning under the local Municipality has been fully equipped and improved and additional bed strength has also been provided Previously it was only an apology for an Isolation Hospital but now in the changed condition it is a regular and well established 30 bedded Isolation Hospital. In Jammu there was no Isolation Hospital and a beginning has been made in the Old Hospital premises where accommodation has been provided for 20 beds to begin with. Arrangements for putting up of a new building are already a foot foor this Hospital. As soon as the building is ready a 50 bedded Isolation Hospital will start functioning in Jammu City. Equipment etc. has already been procured for these Hospitals.

Mental Hospitals

A 50 bedded Mental Hospital has been established in Srinagar and a Psychiatric section for treatment of mental patients has been created in Jammu. The Hospital is provided with all known facilities for treatment of mental patients and adequate accommodation diet etc. for inpatients. It is expected that in due course of time the Srinagar Hospital will be extended to accommodate at least 150 patients and a separate Mental Hospital will be established in Jammu during the 3rd Five Year Plan.

Nursing Home

A Nursing Home with an ultimate bed strength of 25 has been created in Srinagar at a cost of Rs. 0.70 lakhs. This Nursing Home has been provided with all facilities in the shape of X-Ray, Medical and Surgical treatment and a patient has to choose his own Physician or Surgeon for his treatment.

Indigenous System of Medicine

During the Second Five Year Plan period the indigenous system of Ayurvedic and Unani also received considerable impetus. 215 Ayurvedic and Unani dispensaries are functioning in the State today. An Ayurvedic College is being established in Jammu this year and soon a Unani College will be set up in Srinagar. Even in the far-flung district of Ladakh indigenous system of medicine has been encouraged. 12 amchies are at present working in this district who are paid a subsidy of Rs. 600 and a drugs grant of Rs. 300 per annum.

All over the State free medical aid is provided by the Government and no fee for consultation and no price for medicine is charged from patients. The per capital expenditure on Medical facilities is Rs. 3.80 nP. This compares favourably with the per capital expenditure in the other States.

TARGETS TO BE ACHIEVED DURING THE THIRD FIVE YEAR PLAN

1. S.M.H.S. Hospital Srinagar--To the existing bed strength of the Hospital 300 more beds will be added during the Third Plan period.

2. S.M.G.S. Hospital, Jammu—Bed strength of the Hospital will be raised from 250 to 500 i.e. 50 beds will be added in each year of the Plan period.

3. Mental Diseases Hospital, Jammu—A 50 bedded Mental Hospital will be established in Jammu. As already stated in the preceding pages a 50 bedded Mental Hospital exists in Srinagar.

4. Expansion of District Medical Facilities—The bed strength of the existing District Hospitals will be raised from 30 to 50 beds thereby adding in all 140 beds to all the 7 District Hospitals. Specialist's services will also be made available, in these hospitals to reduce the pressure of work on the central hospitals.

5. Expansion of Muffasil Medical Facilities—

(i) 25 Allopathic dispensaries are proposed to be opened during the Third Five Year Plan.

(ii) Existing dispensaries are to be improved by providing additional staff equipment and other facilities.

6. Opening of Primary Health Centres in C.D. Blocks—There are 53 C.D. Blocks in Jammu and Kashmir State out of which only 33 possess Primary Health Centres. During the Third Five Year Plan it is proposed to set up 20 more centres to achieve the target of one Primary Health Centre in each Block.

7. Medical College, Srinagar—The target is to ensure 100 admissions each year in the first year of M.B.B.S. Class.

8. Training of Ancillary Medical Personnel—The following additional ancillary medical staff is proposed to be trained during the Third Five Year Plan:-

(i) Nurses .. 150

(ii) Midwives ..100

(iii) Sanitary Inspectors .. 50

(iv) Compounders .. 200

(v) Theatre Assistants .. 30

(vi) Lab. Technicians .. 60

(vii) X-Ray " .. 40

(viii) Dental " .. 60

(ix) Dawasaz .. 60

9. Health Visitors Training School—By the end of the Third Five Year Plan we will have 53 Primary Health Centres and 32 Family Planning Clinics. Moreover the Central and District Hospitals, the Tehsil Headquarter Hospitals and M C H. Centres need Lady Health Visitors proposed to train 100 Lady Health Visitors.

10. Unani and Ayurvedic College—An Ayurvedic College in Jammu and a Unani College in Srinagar will be set up during the Plan period. The number of admissions in each of the two Colleges would be 30 in each College. It means that 150 students in each of these institutions would be admitted to these institutions up to end of the Third Five Year Plan.

11. Opening of Ayurvedic and Unani Dispensaries—30 Ayurvedic and Unani dispensaries are proposed to be opened during the Third Five Year Plan. This target is, however, likely to rise to 50.

12. Expansion of T.B. Department, Jammu—50 additional beds in the main hospital and 20 beds in the Sanatorium Batote are proposed to be added during the Third Five Year Plan.

13. Expansion of T.B. Department, Kashmir—50 more beds are proposed to be added to the main Hospital and 25 beds to Sanatorium at Tangmarg.

14. T.B. Survey Scheme—In order to assess the incidence of Tuberculosis in the Jammu and Kashmir State, it is intended to apply the device of mass miniature radiography programme. The aim is to find the incidence of T.B. in various districts of the State so as to provide clinics and other medical facilities for the treatment of tuberculosis.

15. Eradication of Leprosy—

(i) The existing two leper hospitals one situated in Jammu and the other in Srinagar are to be improved both in bed strength as well as in provision of other facilities.

(ii) A survey of leprosy in the State of Jammu and Kashmir is proposed to be undertaken during the Third Five Year Plan period.

(iii) A well organised laboratory service is also proposed to be provided for the two leper hospitals.

(iv) Additional wards will be added and more accommodation for more leper patients will be provided.

(v) Domicillary service will be provided for treatment of lepers and their segregation in their homes.

16. Anti V.D. Organisation.—The aim of this organisation is to eradicate venereal diseases from the Jammu Province, where the incidence of such diseases is very high. It is proposed to open two more V.D. Clinics and also to introduce a Pilot Project study.

17. Trachoma.—The incidence of trachoma in the State of Jammu and Kashmir is rather considerable as has been revealed

by the sample survey conducted by a team from Gandhi Eye Hospital, Aligarh. The aim of this scheme is to survey the incidence of this disease and to provide treatment.

18. Goitre.—In some parts of the two provinces the disease of goitre is prevalent. The aim is to survey this disease and to provide treatment and preventive measures.

19. Family Planning.—

(i) Opening of 20 new clinics.

(ii) Creation of central organisation to control Family Planning Centres all over the State and to organise their working.

(iii) Provisions of training facilities for medical personnel working in these centres.

20. Health Education Bureau.—The aim is to establish a nucleus organisation for educating people to achieve health by their own actions and efforts and to take maximum benefit of the facilities provided by the Health Department.

21. Vital Statistical Organisation.—An organisation to collect vital statistics would be established both at the Headquarters and in the District and Provincial offices. At present there is no proper system of collection and interpretation of this vital data. The new proposed organisation will help in the collection and analysis of such data on scientific lines.

22. Preventive Organisation—It is proposed to separate the public health from medical administration and to provide an independent organisation for attending to public health problems, which are so vital and important for better health of the people, during the Third Plan period.

CHAPTER 23

KASHMIR FOLK TALES

By
Somnath Dhar

I

Gulzar was nearly twenty years of age, strong of limb and pleasing to look upon. 'Time to put his wits and enterprise to the test,' his father said to himself. He was a merchant of fabulous wealth; but he wished to reassure himself that his son would carry on worthily after he was gone.

'Here are two hundred pieces of silver, my son,' said the merchant to Gulzar, handing him a purse. 'Go forth into the world. There is much you can learn in their company by employing your eyes and ears wisely.'

Gulzar set out, whistling a lively tune, without a single care in the world. Late in the afternoon, he entered the market-place of a neighbouring town and observed, in one corner, four men engaged in a brawl. It was all over a cat that had wrought havoc among their poultry, and the men were quarrelling over the best means of dealing with the offender. Gulzar watched the poor little animal cowering in terror at their feet, and took pity on it. 'Do sell me the cat,' he pleaded, 'here are a hundred pieces of silver to seal the bargain.' The wrangling was soon at an end, for the men were little loth to set the wretched brute free in return for so much wealth. Gulzar picked up the cat and proceeded on his travels.

A few miles ahead, on the outskirts of a little hamlet, the lad came upon an excited group of rustics about to kill a snake. Again, Gulzar's heart melted with pity, for he was of a very tender disposition. 'Just a moment,' he shouted. 'Let the poor creature go, and I'll give you a hundred pieces of silver in return.' This princely offer, as you might imagine, did the trick.

Here was our young hero now with all his money gone and with two strange pets on his hands. How could he pursue his travels? 'Well, I can do no better than turn back,' he argued within himself.

When Gulzar presented himself before his father, the old man flew into a violent temper. At sight of the pets his son had come by at such expense, he was further convulsed with rage. 'You are more of a donkey than I feared. Out of my sight! Never darken my doors again! Out you go, unless you want me to take a stick to you!'

The poor boy could not guess what he had done to merit his father's wrath. He dragged along with a blank look on his face. There was nowhere he could take shelter. So, towards the distant stables he bent his sorrowful steps. Throwing himself full length on the piled-up hay, Gulzar wept his heart out.

As night fell and the boy dropped into a fitful slumber, his pets kept vigil beside him. The snake spread its hood out above his head, and the cat scurried after the mice that would scratch and nibble at his body.

Next morning, when Gulzar woke up, tired and aching in every limb, the snake reared itself up and addressed him. 'Come to my father's spring, Master,' it said. 'Let us visit him in the caverns deep under the waters. You have given me the boon of my life, and may well ask him for something to requite you for it.'

They dived below the deep waters and entered the Serpent-King's domain, and the Lord of the Snakes demanded of Gulzar what he would accept as a token of his gratitude. The lad answered promptly, 'Your magic ring, my lord, if you will part with it.' That was at his pet snake's whispered prompting. How could the Serpent-King say 'no'?

Presently, Gulzar, dripping wet, emerged from the spring, grasping the magic ring in his hand.

They repaired then to a lovely site on the banks of a stream nearby, and there Gulzar, at the snake's bidding, let the sun's rays flash upon the gem set in the ring. On the instant, there was a gorgeous palace where they stood, furnished with every luxury you could ever want, and liveried servants to attend on you. In the innermost apartment was a bewitching, golden-haired maiden, crooning a sweet love-song. Gulzar took her to wife and lived in the fashion of a prince, happy as the day was long.

Many months passed by. One morning as the fairy princess was combing her golden hair by the river bank, one shining strand dropped into the water and was swiftly carried downstream. It happened to fall into the hands of the King of a neighbouring country, disporting himself in the waters of the river. No sooner had he set eyes on it than he straightway vowed to himself that he would have none other for his queen than the maiden of this golden hair. But who she was he couldn't discover for many months, though he sent out scouts abroad in every direction of the compass. So the poor king sickened of love and grew thinner and thinner, with a fierce desire consuming his heart.

At last they fetched his old aunt to his bedside, a witch as wise and crafty as she was cruel. 'Take heart, my child,' she adjured the King. 'You will have the princess you are pining for.'

She changed herself by one of her mysterious spells into an eagle and scoured the country far and wide.

After long wandering, she came to the country where Gulzar lived with his princess. Here was the end of her restless seeking. She changed herself back into the wrinkled old woman that she was and entered the apartments of the princess. 'Ah, my child, how lovely you look, and what a fine husband you have found!' she exclaimed by way of greeting. 'Now, don't tell me you don't know your own aunt,' she added, wagging her finger mischievously in answer to the princess's look of astonishment.

So clever and so full of tricks was this witch that she had soon won the princess over. It was easy, too, to persuade the foolish, unsuspecting bride to let her inspect the magic ring. But no sooner was this priceless treasure in her hand than the wicked old woman changed herself again into an eagle and soared away.

As the King lay groaning on his sick-bed, the witch hobbled into the room. She thrust the magic ring into his fevered hand, soothed his forehead and whispered into his ear. Then it all happened in the twinkling of an eye. As the sun's rays flashed upon the gem in the ring, the palace came floating in the air, princess and all, to where the King stood. With a heart beating fast, he crossed the threshold, fell on his knees before the lovely, golden-haired damsel, and asked her to marry him.

What could the poor maiden say to this? She was a bit dazed after her flight across the sky. And her husband was nowhere in sight. But a slender hope fluttered in her heart. 'Well, this is too sudden, my lord!' she protested. 'But give me a month's time, I promise to think the matter over!' The poor King, who was dazzled by her beauty, was content to wait. At least she was safe in his own country, and he could surely gaze upon her face and still the turbulence of his spirit.

When poor Gulzar returned from the hunt on that fateful day, he rubbed his eyes in amazement. Where was his palace, and where his own lovely princess? He threw himself on the hard stony ground in a fit of sobbing.

With a friendly mee-aow, his pet cat rubbed its velvet skin against Gulzar's face. 'Take comfort, master,' it purred softly. 'I'll do whatever I can to help you out.' Then it was off with a leap and a bound.

When the cat reached the palace after a long and seemingly endless journey, it was well past midnight. Whom should it then encounter but the King of Rats himself? It pounced upon him and shook him until he whined and squeaked for mercy. 'I'll let you go,' the cat said, 'if you promise to fetch me the magic ring.'

To the King of Rats nothing is really impossible. He is full of wisdom and master of a thousand wiles. Was he perturbed when his servants came round with the story that the witch had swallowed the ring lest it should ever fall into the hands of the King's enemies? He pondered the problem for an hour or two, and then tripped out of his retreat, chuckling to himself.

While the witch lay snoring, the Rat thrust his tail deep down her throat and set up a veritable devil dance. Well, you will guess what happened. The poor old woman jumped out of her bed, clasped her temples in her hands and coughed out all the contents of her stomach. What a mess it was, and what a dismal noise she made! There was the magic ring, too, in what she had brought out. Before the old woman could realize what was happening, the Rat had snatched it up and was out of sight.

The cat accepted the precious ring with plenty of bowing and scraping and hurried back to its master. Well, the rest is simple. The palace, and the princess too, were back in place.

Gulzar was reunited to his Princess—and they lived happily ever after.

As for the witch, she stormed and stamped in her rage until she dropped dead, poor thing. What happened to her royal nephew, the story does not tell.

But you may be sure Gulzar would never again part with the ring, not for the whole world.

II

A tailor and a weaver once set out on a long journey together. They were looking for a country where they could earn much higher wages than their money-grabbing townsmen would pay. To remain for ever poor was wearisome, and visions of great wealth swam before their eyes as they pushed steadily on.

But after two days of painful trudging, the weaver's spirits flagged, his heart sickened with thoughts of home and comfort. Somewhat sheepishly, he turned to his companion. 'I dreamed last night of my wife and children,' he whined, 'and they seemed to cry out for me. I do thing I must turn back.'

'So you must, indeed, my friend,' the tailor readily agreed.

As the tailor now plunged forward alone, he swung the emblems of his trade bravely before him, his metal yardstick in one hand and his large pair of scissors in the other. That seemed to give him courage.

By and by, as darkness fell, he came to a thick forest. The trees here shot up straight into the sky, and all round arose fearful sounds that chilled him to the marrow. What could the poor tailor do? He tried banging the tree-trunks with his

yardstick and brandishing his scissors as though it were a sword. That helped a little.

He had not made much progress before he perceived in the gathering darkness, right in front of him, a ladder propped up against a tree taller than the rest. 'Ha, now indeed I may clamber up into safety for the night,' he murmured to himself as he set his feet on the firm, inviting rungs. Up and up he went. There were more rungs, and ever more. 'I might find myself in heaven with all this climbing!' the wretched man moaned. His feet dragged painfully and he breathed hard. But when he was about to give up this fruitless adventure he touched what appeared to be solid, wooden flooring. What a relief! He peered unsteadily into the blackness and espied some distance away a wooden cabin with a faint beam of light showing through a crack in the door.

Even as the tailor's thoughts hovered around vision, of food and a bed to stretch his tired limbs on, there was an ominous rumble. The door of the cabin was flung open and out stepped the most ferocious-looking Jinn you could imagine. Eyes like saucers, a cruel hooked nose, teeth like a wild beast's fangs, a wide, cavernous mouth. The floor groaned under his weight and his voice rolled out like thunder. 'Hr.m.ph....gr...r..r....what brings you here?' he demanded.

'Not a friendly greeting!' muttered the tailor to himself. He was shaking like a leaf in a gale, of course, though luckily that escaped the Jinn's notice. But he was a brave man for his size, and his wits were as sharp as the sharpest needle he had used. In a trice he had steadied himself.

'Er....I am frightfully sorry to trouble you,' he brought out in level tones. 'Buy my master, the great Lord Solomon, will have only the best hide for his winter robe. If you will excuse me, I must rip the skin off you' (here he snipped his scissors

viciously) 'and measure it out for a coat' (with a menacing flourish of the yardstick).

'O-o-o-h,' the Jinn groaned and stepped back. It was now his turn to shiver. For all his hulking body his brains were smaller than a sparrow's! 'No, no,' he wheedled, 'perhaps you might seek elsewhere? I shall, of course,.....er, make it worth your while.'

The tailor's clever stratagem had worked; he was beside himself with relief. He now solemnly pretended to revolve the Jinn's offer in his mind. 'Well, well,' he whispered like a conspirator, '.... I might, you know.' But the Jinn had disappeared into his cabin. He was back in the twinkling of an eye carrying a bag of gold coins and a fistful of glittering gems that he thrust into the tailor's hands. 'Now if that will do, take yourself off elsewhere and leave me in peace,' he implored, and nearly pushed the bewildered tailor off the tree-top.

As for our hero, he hardly knew whether he was standing on his head or his feet. He spent the night at the foot of the tree, clutching his precious treasure. When day dawned he was hurrying homeward.

Back in his town, what should the tailor do but display his wealth and strut about like a prince! They were all stunned, the good townsfolk, and none more so than the weaver who had deserted him on the outskirts of the forest. One evening he sidled up to his friend and coaxed the story out of him.

The weaver's eyes bulged with wonder as the tailor unfolded his wondrous tale. Why, they must set out again. Perhaps there was countless wealth for the mere asking, and the Jinns, poor things, were such awful nitwits!

The tailor, now grown arrogant, hardly needed much persuasion, and so one fine morning the two fared forth in search of the Jinn's secret hoard.

After three weary days of journeying, the friends found themselves in the self-same forest. It was pitch dark when they reached the foot of the ladder. Panting for breath, they gained the very top. But how utterly still things were! Not a breath issued from the cabin. Instead, on a sudden, there arose a spine-chilling din from below.

When the two friends peered down, a most frightful spectacle met their eyes. More than a score of Jinns were seated on their haunches round a sacrificial fire, chanting, all together, a prayer to Lord Solomon. What a horrible noise they set up! A thin, old priest, meanwhile, poured oblations into the fire.

The weaver lost his nerve and toppled over the edge, right into the circle of Jinns. It was lucky the tailor kept his presence of mind. With ready wit he yelled out as loud as his lungs would permit. 'Quick, round them up, round them up! I'll be down in a moment with scissors and yardstick.—Quick!'

Pandemonium was let loose at the foot of the tree. Yelling and screaming, fighting and scratching, the Jinns fled helter-skelter into the forest. The poor priest fell down in a dead-faint. The tailor scrambled down and saw beside the prostrate priest a large sack of gold and a heap of precious stones. It was a moment's work to help the shaking weaver to his feet. The two then collected all that they could lay their hands on, and before daybreak turned their tired foot-steps homeward.

There was wealth beyond the wildest dreams of avarice in the bag. They shared it equally between themselves and settled down to a life of plenty and ease.

And the wondering townsmen, who had heard whispered tales, pointed to them in the street and nudged one another, 'There go the two valiant men who conquered the Jinns of the Forest!'

III

There was once in the Kingdom of Kashmir a Dervish famed throughout the land for his learning and piety. Disciples from all over the country flocked round this holy man to listen to his teaching and to minister to his needs.

One evening, a certain disciple approached the Dervish, bowed his head before the master and, with tears in his eyes, implored his help. 'Sire,' he cried out, 'my daughter is now come of age. But, alas, where shall I find the wherewithal for her dower? Wretch that I am, who will take a beggar's daughter for his bride?'

The Dervish appeared to be lost in thought for a minute or two. 'Go home, my son,' he then gently adjured the poor man. 'All will be well. Infinite is Allah's mercy! Tomorrow I will invoke His blessings upon your child.'

Early next afternoon the disciple was nearly started out of his wits to see the great Dervish himself standing at his door. In a moment the little household was in the wildest bustle you could think of. Did one ever hear of such high honour? They dusted an ancient and tattered carpet and spread it out for the guest. They plied him with delicious sweets to eat and sherbet to drink. The mistress of the house ran hither and thither on a hundred errands, chattering away in a delirium of excitement.

When the Dervish had rested a while, his host led his daughter Fatima into the holy man's presence. She approached with all the bashfulness becoming to a maiden and touched the

feet of the Dervish, who, thereupon, placed his hands upon her head in token of his blessing.

After all the rest had withdrawn, the Dervish addressed the disciple. 'Listen, my son,' he said with more than his wonted solemnity. 'You are poor, but your child will, nevertheless, find a bridegroom worthy of her great beauty. God's ways are mysterious. We, poor mortals, must place unquestioning trust in Him and carry out His injunctions.

'It all came to me in a vision last night—what you must do that your daughter may win happiness,' the Dervish went on. 'Pay heed. You'll have need for high courage and boundless faith. Place your daughter in a wooden box, close it down securely and seal it. At the hour of dusk tomorrow cast this box into the river and let it drift downstream—so will your child be carried to her destiny. When you have done, repair to the solitude of your room and spend the hours of the night in prayer. Again, put all your trust in the All-Merciful and be of good cheer!' So saying, the master departed.

This Dervish, as you may have guessed already, was far from the holy man people reckoned him to be. His heart was full of wickedness, and his subtle brain teemed with snares and stratagems. Fatima was a comely maiden, radiant as the full moon. When the Dervish looked upon her loveliness he had been smitten with lust. 'I'll take her for my own bride,' he had vowed to himself. No sooner had this sinful thought seized him than his plot was hatched, for he had a nimble and resourceful wit.

Now, back in his own hut, he clapped his hands to summon the rest of his disciples. 'A great task awaits us, tomorrow, my children,' he said when they were gathered round him. 'Satan will go drifting down the river that runs past our village about the hour of sunset. Yes....imprisoned in a big, black, wooden box, floating downstream. Assemble on the wooden

bridge yonder, seize the box and carry it into my room. I shall deal with Satan, alone, behind barred doors, as is the way to deal with him. Stand outside, beat drums, blow trumpets and chant loud prayers in unison, for only thus may the power of Satan be utterly overthrown. Doubtless, he will shriek, and storm and rave. Who knows what scurvy tricks he'll try, what fiendish commotion he will raise! But pay no heed whatsoever; only drown his unholy noise in the sound of sacred music. I charge you, be bold of spirit—and breathe no word of this secret adventure abroad!’

So, that is done, the wily Dervish thought.

About sunset next day, Fatima's father, credulous fool that he was, carried out his master's instructions to the letter. Almost fainting with terror, the poor girl was borne helplessly, by slow and imperceptible stages, towards the bridge.

But the Fates were kind of Fatima. In a pleasant grove by the riverside, not far from the spot where the box had been pushed off on its perilous voyage, was the Prince of a neighbouring country, reclining after a long day's hunting. He cast his eyes lazily on the waters and espied this curious object. ‘What can this be?’ he wondered.

In a moment the box had been fished out and broken open. Then the Prince stepped back in wonder as Fatima, still trembling with fear, but looking as bewitching as a fairy princess, rose unsteadily to her feet. It all happened in a whirl after that. The Prince promised to take Fatima to wife and she, reeling with happiness, was soon pouring her tale into his eager ears.

‘Ah, a villain forsooth!’ the Prince muttered, for he was no fool. ‘I'll teach the rascally Dervish the lesson he deserves!’ He fetched one of his fiercest bloodhounds, thrust him into the box and fastened the lid down. Then he sent this strange cargo spinning down the current towards the bridge. When that was

done, he set out with Fatima. For Fatima, indeed, the Dervish, black as his heart might be, had prophesied truly.

Down by the bridge, a little while later, stout hands were laid on the drifting wooden box. By nightfall the Dervish was alone in his room, all doors bolted and the precious treasure, as he thought, in front of him.

Picture the rest for yourself: the maddened hound leaping at the Dervish's throat and the fierce unavailing struggle as the wretch was torn from limb to limb. As for the disciples keeping watch outside, what indeed were they to do? The master's orders had been strict. The louder he shrieked in his death-agony, the higher rose the beat of drum, the blare of trumpets and the wail of prayers!

The wicked Dervish's sin had come home to roost!

IV

Bahadur Khan, King of Kashmir, was taking the air one evening in the garden set apart for the ladies of his harem. This was his private domain, where none might trespass. There was consternation, therefore, when a servant ran into the royal presence and, trembling, announced that a Faqir had strayed into this forbidden ground.

'Bring him before me,' the King ordered his guards. Was he wrathful? His tone disclosed nothing. Only a faint smile played about his lips.

It was a saintly old man they dragged before Bahadur Khan. 'What harm have I done, Your Majesty?' he asked in a voice full of gentleness.

Before the King could answer, the holy man dropped down, apparently dead. Even as the King and his courtiers

were gasping with horror, a dead parrot lying in a flower-bed nearby stirred to life. It fluttered its wings for a moment and then flew away into the sky, chirping merrily. They had hardly recovered from their stupefaction at these wondrous happenings when the parrot flew back into the garden and dropped dead at their feet. A tremor seemed to pass through the Faqir's lifeless spine, and in a second he was up on his feet, smiling as if nothing at all had happened.

Bahadur Khan and his Vizier threw themselves at the Faqir's feet, for they understood he was truly a saint endowed with miraculous powers. The Faqir, pleased with their submission and moved by their entreaty, instructed them in the secret of this miracle.

Time passed by. One day while the King and his Vizier were out hunting together in the forest, they saw, lying dead in their path, a parrot with the liveliest plumage one could ever hope to see. A great longing came upon Bahadur Khan to see this magnificent bird on the wing. Here was the moment, too, to try the skill they had been taught. 'Do enter the parrot's body,' he begged of his Vizier. But the Vizier, for once, would not obey the royal behest. The more the King urged and pleaded the more adamant did the Vizier become. Was there just a suspicion of defiance on his countenance, the King wondered. But in his burning eagerness to watch the bird come to life, he dismissed the thought with a shrug. 'Well, let me do it myself,' he muttered. It was a moment's work. Bahadur Khan lay dead on the ground! His spirit had wandered into the body of the parrot and the bird was beating its wings in the open spaces of the sky.

The Vizier's eyes glittered and his lips twisted in a wicked grin of satisfaction. Here was the very moment for which he had long lain in wait. No sooner was the bird out of sight than he cast off his own body and entered the King's. He was now Bahadur Khan—King of the fair realm of Kashmir. Least the

real King should ever seek to return to court, he summoned his guards and ordered the Vizier's corpse to be chopped to little bits and scattered to the winds. He issued a royal command too that all parrots found in the kingdom be killed forthwith. His subjects would receive a handsome reward for every bird they destroyed.

As the Vizier-King (as we must now call him) rode back to the capital in triumph, the King-parrot, discovering the cruel trick played upon him, flew to the Faqir's hermitage for refuge. 'Do not be impatient, my son,' the holy man stroked the bird and comforted him. 'Allah is All-Seeing and deals out justice to all creatures!'

Time rolled on. The Vizier-King was out a-hunting in the forest one day, when a hind of exceeding beauty streaked past in a flash of colour. He spurred his steed and set out in chase. Never yet had he ridden so fast, so relentlessly—but not an inch did he gain on his quarry. 'What a shame to let the hind escape!' he exclaimed bitterly as he felt his horse stumble under him.

On a sudden his eyes fell on the carcass of a panther lying in his path. 'A panther is fleeter than the nimblest hind,' he muttered. Quick as lightning he case off his body and entered the panther's to track the animal down.

Haven't you guessed it was all the wise Faqir's doing? The King-parrot was, you may be sure, close by, waiting to dart upon this opportunity. It was done in the twinkling of an eye. The parrot dropped dead, and Bahadur Khan had entered his own body that the Vizier had thoughtlessly abandoned in a moment of madness. Little did his courtiers realize that here was the true Bahadur Khan restored to his former estate.

The King now sent out hunters to capture the panther alive and rode back to his palace.

Next morning the Vizier-panther was wheeled in a wooden cage into the King's presence. 'Is that my Vizier?' Bahadur Khan inquired mockingly. 'Surely, I could not allow a denizen of the jungle to sit in office and offer counsel. No, that would not do at all! And with a loud guffaw, he ordered his guards to roast the best alive. That was the end of the treacherous Vizier.

Bahadur Khan lived happily ever after. And, I am sure, he never again attempted the miracle of spirit transference! 'Much too risky to try,' he might have argued. 'And besides I am too old now to go gadding about.

'To live as King of this fair Valley in security is by far a more pleasant business altogether!

V

Once long ago, the King of Kashmir went a hunting in the jungle. As the sun hung low in the western sky, he gave chase to a magnificent stag and was carried farther and farther away from his capital.

In the hour of sunset, he found himself in a lovely garden. Strolling about among the exquisitely - laid - out flower beds was a beauteous maiden, alone and unattended. 'A Princess, surely,' thought the King, 'but how proud and arrogant she looks!' She, on her part, did not as much as throw a glance in his direction. Stung to the quick, the King muttered just above a whisper, 'I would that some prince took you for his bride and then abandoned you in this very garden!'

The Princess (for she was, in truth, one) tossed her head in disdain. 'I would that someone marry you and bear you a son who will wed your own daughter!' she retorted with a pout, as she walked away.

That was, of course, more than the King could bear. But he had been deeply smitten by the maiden's charms. 'Come what may, I must marry her,' he thought as he rode back to his palace. Next morning, he summoned his Vizier and the royal go-between. He bid them go post-haste to the Princess's father, who ruled the neighbouring kingdom, and negotiate for her hand in marriage. That ruler, as one might imagine, was flattered by the suit of no less a personage than the King of Kashmir. And it wasn't long before the messengers came back to announce the success of their mission.

A week later, the King of Kashmir rode out at the head of a glittering cavalcade to fetch his bride. People stared in wide-eyed wonder as he passed by. When he rode back with the proud Princess, the citizens again lined up all along the way. How they cheered their beauteous new Queen!

There was plenty of rejoicing all over the land, music and revelry, feasting and alms-giving. They were happy—everyone, save the bride. Yes; she, poor thing, was installed in the harem, and that was the last she saw of her royal husband. She languished in those cold, inhospitable apartments. The King would not visit her at all. 'For what nameless, hideous sin am I being thus punished?' the Princess wept, wringing her hands. Then, in a flash, she recalled that first encounter in her garden. The King's vexation and his muttered oath. But she was as patient and clever as she was proud. 'That was a very foolish episode altogether,' she said to herself. 'But if the King sticks to his threat, I must not, indeed, forget my own retort!'

After two months of this existence, she sought the King's permission and left on a 'visit to her parents,' as she put it. Did that not please the King's foolish vanity? 'Ha, ha, ha,' he exulted. 'There, that will teach her to tilt her nose at strangers!' Little did it strike him that he was being very cruel. All because of a moment's annoyance. Of the maiden's sharp rejoinder—'Why waste thought on so idle a fancy?' cried he.

For many months the Princess abode with her parents. Then, as if on a sudden impulse, she left on a secret journey.

To the King of Kashmir, camping in a distant part of his country, they brought word, one evening, that a veiled woman sought audience with him. She was, by all signs, possessed of great wealth and beauty, they declared, but she would not say who she was. The King's curiosity was stirred. He called on this mysterious lady himself, and was admitted into her apartments. How she captivated his heart, one cannot tell, but the King soon became a slave to her slightest whim.

For a month they lived in this manner—the disguised Princess (for she was none other) and the infatuated King, who hardly guessed he had been ensnared by the very woman he had discarded. When one morning she protested she must return to her own country, they exchanged rings as a token of everlasting love.

Back under her parents' roof, the Princess bore a son as lovely as you could ever desire. Her parents, who had learnt of her clever stratagem to win her husband's favours, rejoiced in their grandson. They named him Shabrang.

Little Prince Shabrang grew up into a charming young boy, as smart as he was handsome. He excelled his companions both at his studies and on the playground. But his mother had other plans for him. Nothing would satisfy her but that he should become the most cunning thief in all the country. So she summoned all those skilled in thieving to instruct her son. To little Shabrang it was all fun; what did the innocent lad know of right and wrong? Soon he became light of finger, nimble and stealthy of movement and dextrous beyond all compare. He would steal the very morsel from your mouth with the same ease that he would snatch away the jewels on one's person. Guess at the perfection he had attained!

For his final test, his mother led him out to the foot of a steep crag and pointed to an eagle's eyrie. 'Look, my child,' she said, 'there on top is the mother eagle brooding on her egg. Fetch me the egg if you can, without disturbing the bird!'

No sooner had she spoken than Shabrang stripped himself to the waist. Hand on hand he crept up the sheer face of the rock. Not a breath of sound. Silent as a shadow, he gained the top. The bird still gazed into the lonely spaces of the blue sky. Poised for a fraction of a second on the summit, Shabrang stretched out deft fingers. Then, he was slipping down inch by inch in the same death-like silence.

As he held out the prize to his mother, she folded him in her arms with pride. Tears rolled down her eyes. 'My child, you are heir to the throne of Kashmir,' she said, speaking to him for the first time on the subject. 'Go forth and seek employment under your father. Serve him with skill and utter diligence, and win his heart. Not for one moment let him guess your parentage. When he offers his daughter to you in marriage, say you can do naught without your mother's blessing. Sent for me then!'

So Prince Shabrang journeyed far to his father's kingdom. To find employment in the royal household was easy enough—the lad had engaging looks and a pleasing wit. It was but a short step to catch the King's eye. The rest was simple. Day by day he rose higher in his master's favour. The King would have none other for his personal attendant.

Prince Shabrang, however, led a double life. The urge to practise the skill he had been taught was strong upon him. In the darkness of the night, while the city slept, he stole out on noiseless feet. How easy it seemed to him to steal from the mansions of the rich! There was no lock that he could not pick, and no treasure, howsoever jealously guarded, that he could

not snatch away. As for the guards who paced the city's streets, he just snapped his fingers at them!

So, in time, the tale of Shabrang's depredations got about. Of course, none guessed who the culprit was. They only knew he was cleverer than any they had known in the past, and most elusive. To the King's court came people bemoaning their losses, and crying out aloud for protection. 'We shall be robbed of everything we possess, great Sire,' they wailed, 'unless the guards redouble their vigil and catch the villain.'

What could the perplexed King do? He sent for the chief of the city police, and ordered him, on pain of dismissal, to apprehend the rogue.

It was midnight and pitch dark as the Police Chief wandered about the city's maze of lanes and alleys. He whistled softly to himself and twirled his moustache. No thief would get past him! No hiding-place but he peered into it, no suspicious loiterer but he pounced upon him. 'Ha, who is this?' he exclaimed under his breath as a shadow flitted past, and he gave chase. When he dragged the struggling figure into the light of a street-lamp, he saw it was only a young maiden. 'What, pray, are you doing at this ghostly hour?' he demanded in his most ferocious tone, to hide his chagrin. Shivering, the girl brought out, 'The thief you have been looking for is somewhere about. I heard his stealthy footsteps. He may be here in a moment....O-o-oh! I am afraid.'

'Calm yourself, silly!' the chief admonished her. 'Let me think....I shall lay a trap for the scoundrel.' There was a soft interruption from the girl. 'If you will pardon me....I suggest you disguise yourself...Why, we might exchange our garments.' She clapped her hands with delight. 'Yes....and stand beside the well yonder and pretend to be drawing water. Now, don't you agree that's an excellent plan?'

The Police Chief fell in with the scheme readily. The girl is smart, he thought. Wrapped in her sari, he walked to the well. But poor, innocent man, what did he know of its crude mechanism? When he tugged violently at the rope, he was thrown off his balance. Next moment he was dangling at the end of the rope, just above the water's edge, inside the shaft of the well. Who was there now to pay heed to his cries for help? From somewhere above his head he heard the maiden's mocking laughter. 'They will pull you out at dawn, my friend. Now I may go about in safety!' That, as you must have guessed already, was our hero, Shabrang.

Were the honest citizens thrown into panic and confusion? The Police Chief dangling at the end of a rope, to be the laughing stock of every ragamuffin in town! The thief slipping through the fingers of the guards! 'Preposterous!' they shouted with one accord. So, in the palace yard, the people raised another big clamour!

The King was at his wits' end. Nothing could now satisfy him save the Vizier's undertaking the mission himself.

The Vizier, of course, did not relish the task of patrolling the city's twisting alleyways by night. But carry out the King's injunction he must. His horse ambled along leisurely. Its hooves beat out a plaintive tune on the ancient cobblestones. Suddenly the Vizier espied, by the flickering light of a lantern, an old, wrinkled woman grinding maize by the roadside. 'What keeps you up so late in the night, granny?' he enquired. And on an idle impulse, added, 'Have you by any chance seen our champion rogue hereabouts?'

'I wouldn't say no, I wouldn't say yes,' the old dame answered in a shrill voice. 'There are funny sounds I have been hearing for some time. Well, he may be close by for all I know.'

It was the same ruse all over again. The 'old woman' had quickly persuaded the thoughtless Vizier to wear her rags and to sit at the grinding stone. Shabrang (again it was the Prince-Thief in disguise) was soon riding away into the night on the Vizier's horse!

There was a hullabaloo in the city next morning. Hundreds of people tumbled out into the streets crying that their hoarded treasures had been stolen. The Vizier had been discovered in an old woman's rags grinding maize by the roadside—what a disgrace!

The King was beside himself with mortification. He stormed a good deal, while his courtiers listened with heads bowed in shame. 'You are a set of idle, scatter-brained good-for-nothings! This thief has every one of us tied in knots. Listen, if the thief proclaims himself, we will give him our daughter in marriage and straightway bestow half of our kingdom upon him. He is a better man than all of you put together, I am sure.'

In the silence that followed, Shabrang stepped forth, looking like a young god. 'Is that a pledge, Sire?' he enquired. The King stared at the impudent youngster. 'Yes, indeed,' he said and stared the harder. What was so familiar about the lad's features? his thoughts chased round and round this teasing question.

'I am the thief you are looking for, Sire,' Shabrang announced amidst pin-drop silence. 'If you must have proof, I'll restore to its rightful owner every single thing that has been stolen in the city. Choose the hour, my lord, and it shall be done!'

The King's eyes softened. He had taken a great fancy to this handsome boy. And this confession of a surpassing skill inclined his heart towards the youngster even more strongly.

But Shabrang would not marry to princess until his mother had been sent for. 'I can do naught without my mother's counsel, Sire,' he protested.

When Shabrang's mother appeared before the King of Kashmir she handed him the ring he had given her as a lovetoken. 'Shabrang is your son, my lord,' said she. 'How can he ever marry his own sister?'

The King nodded his head, but he hardly understood. And Prince Shabrang's mother, with gentle raillery, recalled the long-forgotten episode—the tale of an encounter in a garden, an idle oath and the angry retort that it had called forth.

There were tears in the King's eyes as he embraced his queen—tears at the same time of happiness and penitence. As for Prince Shabrang, he was proclaimed heir to the throne of Kashmir amidst a round to festivities seldom before equalled in splendour.

VI

Once, very long, ago, four friends set out on a far journey. To beguile the tedium of the hours they took turns at recounting stories. When each of them had finished his tale, they fell in with a stranger. 'Tell us a story, comrade,' they implored him with one voice.

'You shall have five stories, my friends,' the stranger replied, 'if you will pay me five hundred pieces of silver.'

'You set too high a price on your powers of entertainment, they cried out in protest. 'But amongst the four of us, we will pay you each a hundred pieces of silver. That's good value, to be sure?'

The stranger nodded agreement, collected four hundred shining coins and cleared his throat. 'My stories aren't really stories, you must understand,' he began. 'They are maxims for your guidance; but, let me assure you, they are worth their weight in gold. Pray, listen:

'Money, my good friends, is meant for travel. That's the first.

'A friend will stand by you even while you are penniless.

'Lean upon no relation in the hour of distress.

'A wife is true and loyal so long as she is by her husband's side.

'And for my last maxim, he alone shall win the hand of Emperor Vikramaditya's daughter who can vanquish sleep.

'That's all, brothers, and may the gods protect you on your wayfaring!'

No sooner had the story teller finished than the four travellers set up a clamour. Shaking angry fists in his face, they shouted that they had been brazenly cheated. What gross impudence! Stories, forsooth! At last, after they had cried themselves hoarse, they dragged the stranger into the King's presence and laid a complaint against him.

The King listened patiently as the four men, spluttering with rage, told of the impostor's trick. 'Here is something intriguing,' he said to himself. Then he turned to the victim of so much wrath and addressed him: 'Well, my good man, what have you got to say for yourself?'

'Sire,' the story teller made answer with great composure, 'I gave them five maxims to cherish and to live by. Four hundred

pieces of silver was all they gave me in return for counsel beyond all price. A paltry sum, I reckon. I shall repeat them for your royal ears, Sire, if you will deign to give me five hundred silver pieces.'

After a moment's thought, the King summoned his treasurer and ordered the money to be counted out. Thereupon, the story teller intoned the five maxims in the same unruffled tones, and fell silent.

The King's first impulse was to laugh at this foolishness. Then he reflected on the strange words. Wouldn't it be a good idea to put them to the test? Had he not paid a whole lot of money for the advice?

One fine morning, therefore, the King sent his queen off to her parents, and announced that he was setting forth on a secret mission. At dead of night he stole out of his palace attired like a mendicant. But, in difference to the story teller's precept, he carried hidden on his person seven precious rubies.

After many weary days' journeying, the King appeared before his sister's door, begging for food and shelter. This sister was queen of a neighbouring kingdom. When she saw her brother clothed in tatters and besmeared with the dust and grime of travel, she was struck dumb, with amazement. But there was not a shadow of pity in her eyes. He sought to soften her heart with a woeful tale of defeat in battle and utter ruin. She only recoiled from him in shame. 'Do not disgrace me in the eyes of my husband,' she screamed. 'Away with you and your filthy rags!'

'You are hard-hearted, my beloved sister,' said the beggar in a voice that seemed to tremble with self-pity. 'I give you my word I will not darken your door with my presence. But will you not relent just a little and send me food that I may appease my hunger? I am tired and famishing as I have never been

before in my life.' As he turned to leave, he said over his shoulder, 'And as a token of your charity, please set your own seal on the dish.'

When the food was brought to the royal mendicant, he repaired to a lonely spot and buried the dish deep under the earth. Then he resumed his wanderings.

Two days later the King, still disguised as a beggar, sought the house of a friend of earlier days, in yet another kingdom. What an overwhelming welcome awaited him here! The good man rushed out and clasped the King in a fond embrace, notwithstanding the signs of poverty and squalor that stood out on his person. He led him indoors with every mark of hospitality, gave him clean garments to wear, rich and delicious food to eat and a soft bed to lie in. If the King was in trouble, why, here was healing for his wounds. All that this honest soul possessed was at his friends' disposal to the uttermost.

Early next morning, the King fought back his tears and swallowed the lump in his throat as he said good-bye to his true friend. No, for all the worthy man's entreaties, he would not tarry. He had a long journey to go, he said, and many big tasks to accomplish.

As he fared forth, the King's thoughts turned on the story teller's maxims. How truly he had spoken! In the hour of one's deepest grief one's own kith and kin cast one off; while in the self-same hour one found one's anchor in a friend.

The King's wanderings now took him to the country where his queen dwelt under her father's roof. Here he found employment with the Master of Horse to the royal household, a person of massive build, with a swaggering, handsome face, and a black, sinful heart.

Going about his errands, one evening, our hero espied a strange woman creeping stealthily into his master's inner chamber. A nameless suspicion crept into his mind. He tiptoed to the door and peeped through the key-hole. O horror of horrors! It was his own queen with the Master of Horse! And as if to rub salt into his raw wound, he then heard soft lovers' murmurings issuing from within. How, indeed, could he bear this agony of soul!

A shout broke in upon his torment. The door had been flung open. It was the Master of Horse pointing to a broken chair. 'Hey, you, can you mend this for me, quick?'

What could our hero do but obey? As he set about the task, the guilty woman took one quick look at his face. Next moment, shaking with terror, she was whispering into her paramour's ear, 'That's my husband, that creature! May the gods help me! Send for your executioner this instant, let his head be cut off. Else I am lost!'

So the poor, innocent servant was dragged out into the forest to be dispatched to his doom. But, happily, the executioner was as covetous as he was cruel. When his victim fetched seven large, blood-red rubies out of his waistband, his eyes grew large with greed. 'You shall have three of them for yourself if you will let me go,' the King said. 'The rest you shall have for safe-keeping till I call for them.' The wretch was not loth to set his prisoner free in return for riches beyond his wildest dreams.

As the King set out once again on his travels, he said to himself, 'There's more in the story teller's maxims than appears on the surface. Here's the truth of two more revealed. Had I not carried treasure on my person I should have been a rotting carcass in yonder forest. And woman's fidelity, ugh....what's it but a broken reed?

'Now for the hand of Emperor Vikramaditya's daughter. What a great prize to strive for! If only I can conquer sleep....? That shouldn't be impossible, surely!'

After much wandering, the King appeared at the magnificent court of Vikramaditya. He was disguised in a sanyasin's saffron robe. 'O mighty Emperor,' he addressed the monarch on the throne, 'I am here as a suitor for your daughter's hand. The fame of her beauty and her accomplishments has travelled to far-off lands. Gladly would I abjure my vows of celibacy and renounce this monkish garb if I can win her for wife.'

The Emperor's lips curled in a smile of mockery. 'You little know the perils that beset your quest, holy man,' he said. 'Scores of stout men have perished in the attempt to win my daughter's hand. Go into her apartment tonight, if you will not be restrained by the awesome tales they tell. And if you are found alive at dawn, why, you may have the princess in marriage—with my blessing too!'

No, that wasn't enough to daunt our hero. So an hour or two after nightfall he was conducted into the Princess's apartment. She was as lovely a damsel as one could ever hope to rest one's on, and full of sweet, gentle, ways. The hours sped by on magic wings as she kept up an endless and delicious patter. Then, as the gong in the palace courtyard struck the hour after midnight, her eyes grew heavy with sleep. She lay back, stretched her soft limbs, yawned in the most bewitching manner and, in a trice, was fast asleep.

In the loneliness of the night the King now strove with sleep. To win this fair prize he must fight and vanquish the leaden feeling that now crept into every pore of his body. He sensed the approach of a great danger, too. 'Beware!' a voice seemed to say. Quick as lightning, he made up his clothes into a bundle the shape of a man, laid it on the silken mattress be-

side the Princess, and crept into a dark corner to keep watch. His shaking hands closed on the hilt of his sword. O what a dreadful vigil it was!

Slowly the rosebud lips of the sleeping princess parted. Then, as the King's blood seemed to freeze with horror, there issued from between those lips a monstrous serpent. It uncoiled its whole vicious length, reared its hood with a loud hiss and plunged its venomous fangs into the dummy beside the princess.

In an instant, the King had mastered the quaking of his limbs. He slipped out of his corner, raised the sword on high and smote the fearful monster with every ounce of his strength. The serpent lay dead at his feet. He hacked it to pieces, gathered the mess in a heap under the couch, and then stretched his tired, aching limbs to rest.

At the hour of dawn, the Emperor's guards came, as was their wont, to carry yet another hapless suitor's corpse away. But they rubbed their eyes in wonder when the sanyasin himself, whole of limb and with a cheerful grin, opened to their loud knocking.

Vikramaditya himself came breathless to see the miracle. Had the curse on his daughter been lifted at last? When he heard the sanyasin's grim tale and bent to look under the couch, he knew indeed that deliverance had come. 'Now for the wedding!' he shouted as he embraced our hero.

'Not yet, my lord,' said the sanyasin, 'I have a few grave responsibilities to discharge; only then may I return to claim your daughter's hand. He then exchanged tokens with the princess and took leave of the Emperor.

His mission accomplished, the King returned to his own kingdom amidst great popular rejoicings. Then he set forth again at the head of a shining retinue.

He first rode into the city where his sister reigned as queen. O what a splendid welcome he was accorded! But he had fetched the sealed dish to that other day. 'Remember the mendicant whom you sent away from your door with this poor gift, sister?' he asked. And the poor queen grew red with shame, flung herself at her brother's feet and besought his forgiveness.

Next, he repaired to the city where his true friend dwelt. The good man wept tears of happiness to see the King restored to his former estate, as he thought. And the King told him the tale of his wanderings and showered upon him a thousands marks of his affection and esteem.

Then he entered the city where his faithless consort abode with her father. He laid bare the story of her wickedness and of the sin of the Master of Horse. Poor wretches, what could they say when the executioner bore witness to their crimes. The erring queen's father put the lovers in chains and flung them into a deep dungeon.

And then, at last, at the head of a truly resplendent cavalcade, he rode into Vikramaditya's imperial city. The Emperor was transported with delight when he saw that his daughter's suitor was a King, no less. And the princess rejoiced that her lord and master was no mere mendicant. The wedding was solemnized with a magnificence rarely-equalled at the court.

Thus ends the tale of the story teller and his maxims. That wise man, you may be certain, was not forgotten. For he was summoned to Vikramaditya's great city, where riches and honour were heaped upon him.

VII

'Last night, in a dream, I beheld the most enchanting princess,' the prince confided to the Vizier's son. They were inseparable companions, and neither had a secret he would not instantly share with the other. 'She was strolling about in a garden where the breeze was laden with the perfume of sweet flowers,' the prince went on. 'Her loveliness took my breath away. She cast one lingering glance at my face, but not a word would she utter. My whole being longs for her, my friend. Whatever shall I do?'

Young as he was, the Vizier's son was full of wise stratagems. Was he not descended from a long line of Viziers whose exploits were the theme of legend and song?

'In what direction lay this garden of your dream?' he enquired.

'O, that's easy' replied the prince, 'I can recall every inch of the road I took to get into that garden.'

'Set your mind at rest then,' said the Vizier's son. 'At daybreak tomorrow, we set forth along this same road. And we shall see what we shall see!'

On the morrow, the two friends rode out of the city, the prince leading the way. When the sun hung low in the western sky, they reached a strange city. Marvelling greatly at the wide avenues and the handsome mansions on either side, they ambled on until they gained the entrance to the royal gardens. Here they dismounted and crept inside, unnoticed by the sentries.

The very first person on whom the prince's eyes alighted was the princess of his dream. She was even more ravishing than the apparition of the night before. Her lips, bent demurely

over a sweet-smelling flower, were like rosebuds. When she flashed a dazzling smile at the intruders from under her long, silken eyelashes, the prince quite lost his wits. But, even as in the dream, she would say naught. She only flung the flower in the direction of the moon-struck youth, tossed her golden curls, and daintily tripped out of sight.

With words of comfort and reassurance, the Vizier's son led the reluctant prince out of the garden and found lodgings for the two of them in an ancient inn. 'Take heart, my friend,' he urged, 'I promise to fetch the princess to you.'

Early next morning, the lad went out into the city and sought employment with the baker to the royal household. He worked diligently and fashioned delicious cakes of curious and bewitching patterns, especially for the princess. No sooner did the princess set eyes on the delicacies spread out before her than she sent for the baker. 'These aren't your handiwork, surely!' she exclaimed. 'No, Your Highness,' the good man confessed. 'A stranger and a stripling begged to work for me. It was his cunning hand that wrought these. They were for your special delectation, he kept on saying.'

'Send him to me, quick!' the princess ordered, almost forgetting herself in her excitement.

Presently, the Vizier's son, baker's apron and all, was ushered into her chamber. The princess's questions came tumbling one upon another. The youth, smiling inwardly at her impetuous nature, told her all about the prince, how he had been smitten by her beauty and how he lay pining for love in a squalid inn not a stone's throw from the palace.

'I despair for his life, sweet princess,' he lied stoutly. 'Methinks it is a sickness of the heart that only a smile from our compassionate eyes can heal.'

The princess, being of a tender disposition, was prevailed upon to visit this ardent youth. Though she would not admit it, she had taken a fancy to the prince who had stared at her with the bulging eyes of a lovesick swain. 'I'll be at the inn at the hour of midnight,' she promised the Vizier's son.

When the prince heard the glad tidings he was beside himself with happiness. In truth, the poor lad was so over-wrought that when the hour of the princess's visit struck, he was fast asleep in bed!

The early rays of the sun slanting into his apartment woke him up. As he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes he suddenly recollected the midnight assignation. He tumbled out of bed and ran to his friend's aide, weeping: 'The princess.....oh!.....oh!....she broke her word after all!'

The Vizier's son was not to be taken in, however. He comforted the poor youth with kind, soothing words, and with deft fingers, meanwhile, turned out his pockets. Five glittering marbles and a dainty silk handkerchief with the princess's crest embroidered upon it dropped out. His own handkerchief was missing. 'Ha!' exclaimed the Vizier's son, wagging a finger, 'she was here right enough! Confess now...'

Here, the poor lad burst into a fit of sobbing. He was the biggest fool you could think of—lying asleep like an ox while his dream princess had come a-visiting!

'But, why these marbles?' he shot at his friend between two choking sobs.

'Ha, to remind you that you are still a baby!' ventured the Vizier's son with a hint of unkind mockery. 'They are for you to play with!'

But his heart melted with pity as the prince yielded to a fresh outburst of grief. He gently patted his friend on the shoulder, whispered words of courage and sallied forth again.

The baker's apprentice was soon face to face with a somewhat indignant princess. how, indeed, could he make excuses for his friend? How could he mollify this lovely creature? She was stamping about the room, her silver anklets beating out an angry tune.

But the Vizier's son was as resourceful as he was determined. He pleaded and cajoled as never before. By slow degrees, the princess was won over. The cloud of anger vanished from her brow. Her cheeks dimpling with smiles, she was promising to visit the prince again at the hour of midnight.

You may be sure that this time the prince was very wide awake when the fateful hour struck. She looked more adorable than ever before. She bubbled over with laughter and kept up a continuous chatter about sweet nothings. And the prince, who couldn't take his eyes off her lovely countenance for a moment, bethought himself in very heaven.

But the Fates (alas!) were unkind to the poor innocent lovers. Jealous of their happiness, perhaps, they sent the Vizier of the kingdom prowling about that very quarter of the city. As he stood in the cobbled alley-way beside the inn, the tinkle of girlish laughter fell upon his ears. One hand astride his waist and the other stroking his moustache, he looked up. The voice that was wafted down to him—yes, it was not unfamiliar. 'Ah, our naughty little princess!' he exclaimed with a malicious flick of his fingers. Next moment, he broke in upon the lovers. 'Here's a pretty kettle of fish!' he bellowed. At a signal from him, the city guards rushed in and hauled the two tender creatures away to prison.

The Vizier's son wrung his hands in despair when they brought him news of the tragedy. But his nimble wits were racing ahead with schemes. In the first flush of dawn he was hobbling along in the guise of an old woman, bent over a gnarled stick and carrying a basket of wheaten cakes on his head. At the prison gates the guards at first laughed at granny's importunity. She whined that she was on an errand of mercy. But presently they relented. If the kindly old soul must fetch food for the unfortunate creatures in their cell, who were they to say 'no'?

No sooner was the old woman inside than she sprang to life. It took her only two winks to gain the cell where his friends were confined. Between tears and laughter, the princess quickly slipped on the disguise and then, bent double, hobbled past the gates under the very noses of the guards.

Two hours later, the Vizier dragged an incredulous king to this same prison-cell. 'Your daughter, Sire!' he cried out triumphantly, pointing a finger at the lad swathed in the princess's sari. The king lifted the veil, scanned the face underneath and discovered that he had been put upon. What a stupid prank, and what a wicked slander against the child he so dearly cherished! Eyes blazing with fury the turned on the Vizier withdrawn sword; and before the wretch could bring out a single word of explanation, his head was rolling on the prison floor.

The Prince and the Vizier's son were set free, it is true. But of what avail was freedom when the whole city was ringing with the news that the princess was soon to wed the king of a neighbouring country? There was little our Vizier's son could do about that. For the princess, notwithstanding all her protestations, had been betrothed long since. Today, the city was all a-flutter. Floral arches, banners and gay festoons seemed to have sprung up wherever one cast one's eyes.

Again, with a sinking heart, perhaps, the Vizier's son set about laying his plans. As baker's apprentice, he contrived to gain the ear of the princess. His tongue had lost nothing of its cunning, his wits none of their sharpness. But could he accomplish a miracle in the little time left before the wedding day?

When the royal bridegroom arrived, our princess was outwardly composed. On the day of the wedding, she was all that a bashful bride should be. A proper veil hid the glint of resolution in her eyes. The women of the palace fussed over her. There was music everywhere, and peal upon peal of merry laughter. Then came the priests and their tiresome ceremonial.

At last the time came for her to leave her parental home with her bridegroom. To the playing of pipes and the beating of drums, the gay procession made its way out of the city. The bride, in silk and brocade, was borne in a golden palanquin. Who could guess at the flutter in her little heart?

At the hour of dusk, they halted in a forest glade for the evening's repast. It all happened then in less time than it takes to tell. The Vizier's son, veiled from head to foot, slipped into the palanquin. The princess stole away to where the lovelorn prince kept impatient vigil, to be caught up into his saddle and whisked off.

The Vizier's son, as you may imagine, did not enjoy being couped up in a palanquin. Soon, however, the bridegroom's sister clambered in beside him. She, unsuspecting girl, had come out of pure kindness to keep the lonely bride company. The lad, as you know, was endowed with a tongue that could melt a stone; and when he found the maiden as lovely as she was intelligent, he laid siege to her heart. Before the party set up camp for the night he had scattered all her defences. She was willing, she confessed demurely, to follow him to the ends

of the earth. So, under cover of darkness, he stole away with his prize to join the waiting prince.

Early next day, the friends journeyed back to their own kingdom. O what a joyous welcome they received, for the parents, poor distracted souls, had almost given them up for lost!

And how much more was their gladness when they discovered that they had both fetched for themselves brides more beautiful than they could ever think of.

(1949)

CHAPTER 24

AKANANDUN

By
S.L. SADHU

Long long ago there lived a king. His principality comprised seven towns and his capital was called Rajapuri. He was a kind and conscientious ruler and dispensed justice with an even hand to high and low alike. He maintained peace and his subjects lived happy and content under him. He was a god-fearing man and his subjects held him in reverence as their father. He punished with a severe hand all those who dared to trouble his subjects in the least. He took measures for the welfare even of the birds and animals living in his country. Ponds were dug to store drinking water for the quadrupeds and troughs were placed on perches to enable birds to quench their thirst. In all this he was assisted by able, honest and hardworking ministers.

His subjects had but one longing and that was for the birth of an heir-apparent. The king had but one queen who had borne him seven daughters. The king and the queen were highly devoted to each other but craved for the birth of a little brother to the seven sisters to gladden the hearts of the subjects and their own. The Prince would shoulder the responsibilities of the kingdom in time to come. Even his subject begged God Almighty in their matins and vespers to grant their ruler the gift of a little son, and the royal couple did all in their power to secure such a coveted fruit. They gave lavishly in charity which included gifts of land, garments, corn, livestock and gold. Holy

men from far and near came to Rajapuri to give their benedictions to the queen who also met the expenses on the weddings of many destitute girls and the maintenance of orphans and widows. Still the heir-apparent of their dreams was as far away as ever.

The king except when busy with the affairs of the State was always melancholy. "What good is it for me to rejoice in my palace," he would brood, "when the line of my illustrious ancestors will come to an end with my demise? Happy are the poor beggars in my kingdom who look forward to the day when their sons can relieve them of their burdens....Were it not better for me to renounce my throne and take to the life of an ascetic in the forests of the vast Himalayas or in the cave of Shri Amarnath Ji...?" He did not reveal this corner of his heart to his consort lest she feel hurt. She, however, had not given up hope and retained faith in holy men and ascetics.

One day the queen was sitting as usual in her chamber when she was startled by a call for alms. It was nothing new for her who satisfied hundreds of such calls every month, but this time there was a peculiar lure and a strange tone in the voice of the caller which demanded the personal attention of the queen. She at once rushed to the courtyard. She beheld a jogi invested in an expression of ecstasy. He had long locks of curly hair running down to his back, his bare body was smeared with ashes and he had a clattering wooden sandal under his feet. He had rings in his ears and his eyes were sparkling. He carried a beggar's bowl in his hand and a wallet hung from his shoulder. The queen requested him to name what would please him.

"Give me anything in the name of God," replied the jogi. The queen told her consort that the jogi was the very person whose aid should be enlisted in seeking fulfilment of the age-long craving. She gave him a handful of precious stones which he received in his wallet. The queen explained to him how she

was pining for a son. She said, "God gave us a kingdom to rule and many rulers acclaim our suzerainty. but what is the good of all this splendour when we have no male issue to look after it on our demise? Our seven daughters will go their own way and bless the homes of young men unknown to us. Would that they had a brother to shine in their galaxy as the sun!" she concluded with a sigh.

The jogi listened, apparently unmoved.

"With your permission may I say something more?" asked the queen.

The jogi nodded and the queen proceeded, "Only a few days back I saw in a dream a care-free man resembling you. He patted me on the shoulder and assured me that my longing would be fulfilled after nine months. O jogi, you alone can interpret this dream."

Cutting the matter short the jogi said that he would give them a son provided they returned the child to him after twelve years. "The child will be yours for twelve years if you promise that I can have him at the end of that period," he said firmly. The king and his consort held consultations and ultimately gave their promise that he could have the child back after twelve years. On this solemn promise the jogi gave them the assurance that their barren land would soon turn green and their longing for a male child would be fulfilled even before their expectation. "Call the baby by the name of Akanandun," he added, took a few strides and was lost to view.

In due course the queen was conscious of motherhood once again. At first she kept it a secret. When her consort made persistent inquiries she shared the secret with him on the condition that he kept it to himself.

"It is none else but Akanandun" said the king and rejoiced in his heart. "Was it God or man who granted us the gift?" he added complimenting the jogi.

"Don't count your chickens before they are hatched," cautioned his wife.

Nine months being over the queen was in labour pains and was delivered of a male child. "The jogi has indeed made his word good," said the king. There were immense rejoicings in the whole country on the birth of the heir-apparent. Thanksgiving services were held in temples and shrines, and people came in large numbers to the ruler to offer their congratulations. Inside the palace everyone was mad with joy. The king who already possessed a stout heart for giving gifts was bountiful like a river. God had fulfilled his heart's desire and he tried his utmost to see that nobody went away disappointed from his door.

The baby was brought up right royally. There were seven wet-nurses to feed him at the breast. Their lullabies chanted melodiously sent him to sweet slumbers. They rocked his cradle which was draped in velvet and cloth of gold, and inlaid with gems. The baby was the dearest little creature ever born. His eyes and eye-brows, his nose, his lips and chin, his forehead and complexion—each in its own way betokened an extraordinary heredity for the little infant who shone as the light of the palace. His sisters fondled him in all affection and he was the apple of the eyes of his parents who were ever grateful for his birth.

The baby grew fast into a child and then a strong, handsome and intelligent boy. His parents arranged for his education in a befitting manner. Akanandun, for that is how they named the new-born as advised by the jogi, went to school with his satchel and drank the learning deep according to the fashion of the time. His teachers were not a little surprised at

his acute intelligence and sharp wit. The boy imbibed all that was worth knowing.

While everyone looked hopefully to the future when the boy, in the fullness of his physical strength and the maturity of his wisdom, would relieve his father of the burden of ruling the State, there was one day a wild uproar in the streets. "What is all this hue and cry about?" asked the passers-by and heard back in whispers: "Twelve years are over and the jogi has returned to claim the child." People talked with trepidation. "Was all this a dream?" "And is the jogi really so callous as to deprive us of the young prince?" "Will he blow out the lamp which is the only source of light in the palace and abroad?"

Meanwhile the jogi made his call at the palace and the ruler and the queen rushed out to welcome him within. Their hearts were full with the debt of gratitude for the jogi for the invaluable gift and they were only too eager to do something to repay the debt to whatever extent. They solicited him to take a seal of honour and to indicate what would please him.

he replied, "I have come to seek fulfilment of the promise you gave. I have not seen Akanandun for more than twelve years. Get him to my presence now."

"The child has gone to the seminary. He will be here presently," said the queen.

"If you but name a precious gift I would deem it a privilege to place it at your feet," submitted the father.

The jogi promptly replied, "I have nothing to do with gifts. I simply want my Akanandun."

The parents made many subtle attempts to beguile his mind, but to no purpose. These attempts only enraged him. He called the child by name and the latter was on the spot imme-

diately. They submitted that he was the one who alone sustained their lives and that their very existence was impossible without him. The jogi was harsh and stern, "I have to kill Akanandun and you will rue it if you try to dissuade me."

Everybody who heard it burst into tears except the jogi. He divested the child of his garments and ornaments. Warm water was got for cleansing his body to which his mother had to attend. The child had a bright and radiant body and the jogi had him dressed in bright new clothing. He had the soles of his feet dyed in henna and applied collyrium to his bright almond eyes. The child looked like a fresh-bloomed flower, but the jogi had no time to waste. Proceeding forthwith to kill the child, he got a butcher's knife. Everybody there cried but the jogi was entirely remorseless. He said Akanandun sprawling on the ground and asked his sisters to catch hold of his limbs severally. There was a tremendous intensification in the hue and cry raised. The king tore his tunic to shreds and his wife rolled herself on the dust. But the jogi was remorseless and reminding them of the promise given warned them of the inevitable consequences if they tried to shirk the fulfilment of the promise.

The jogi passed on the knife to the king and asked him to behead the child. Even demons and monsters would fail to comply with such a commandment. But when the king betrayed hesitation the inexorable jogi, overawing him, pushed the knife into his hand. Finding that there was no escape the unlucky father cut the innocent throat and scarlet blood welled out. The house was turned into hell. Who was so petrified as to resist sobbing and crying? There was beating of breasts, gnashing of teeth and pulling of hair. The blood stained the walls, coloured the floor and dyed their clothes.

The Involuntary movement of the child's limbs having petered out, the jogi severed them, had them washed and began to hack the flesh assiduously like a butcher. when it was over he asked them to put the flesh into an earthenware vessel

and to boil it. Akanandun's mother attended to it smothering her sobs and hiccoughs. The jogi warned her, on pain of dire punishment, not to lose even the least particle of flesh. When the faggots were burning bright, the jogi asked her to put the lid on. He also got oil poured into several cauldrons which were put on fire. The flesh was thus cooked as if it were mutton, salt and spices being added according to need. The jogi asked the queen to make haste as he was getting hungry. The lady could suppress her feelings no longer and burst out upon him: "which is the faith that permits thereto eat human flesh?" O stone-hearted jogi, how have I ever offended thee? Aren't thou afraid of the curse of the innocent sufferers?"

The jogi replied, "O lady, I am indifferent to all the human weal or woe. You may take me for a goblin or an ogre, but I have to fulfil my promise. So, without prolonging the matter please attend to your cooking and tell me how it tastes."

In spite of her protests the unfortunate lady was forced to taste the soup. The jogi asked her to pick out the flesh and to cool it as it was his wont not to eat steaming dishes. He also asked for seven freshly baked earthenware bowls. The bowls were got and he distributed the flesh evenly among them all. The queen asked him what for he was dressing up seven bowls with flesh. He replied promptly, "Four are meant for the female folk, two will suffice us, two males, and one I am keeping for Akanandun."

This was a blow which cut the queen deep in her heart. "How preposterously the fellow speaks," she thought.

Meanwhile the jogi passed on the bowls to the people for whom they were meant and turning to the queen, said, "O lady, go and call Akanandun upstairs. I shall feel really glad to see him and I can't taste a bit in his absence."

This was obviously too much for her and she could not help saying, "O jogi, I completely fail to fathom your mind. I have suffered the loss of my son, but have not lost my wits yet."

The jogi returned, "I'm not what you take me for, O lady; I constantly change my deceptive appearances," and with that he gazed at the queen so that she seemed to have been held in a vice.

When he again asked her to call Akanandun from below she could not help going downstairs. And when she called him by name she was surprised to hear, "Coming mother." Anon he came to her as before, was held in fond embrace and carried upstairs where another pretty bewilderment was in store for her. The jogi was nowhere to be seen and the seven bowls of cooked flesh had disappeared.

CHAPTER 25

THE CLEVER LAWYER AND THE CLEVERER CLIENT

By
S.L. SADHU

Once upon a time there lived a clever lawyer named Ghulam Mustafa Khan. He had a roaring business, for he had the reputation for finding a solution to the difficulties of all his clients. His name was familiar to all those driven to litigation and courts. It was shortened to Musa Khan and to Musa in colloquial language.

One day his attention was drawn to a client who was unduly humble. He seemed to be much oppressed and miserable. He stated his business to the lawyer, sobbing. He was a petty shopkeeper and was the only bread-winner of a large family. His business had failed and he had been obliged to seek a loan. He had paid a considerable sum by way of interest but could not cope up with the loan and the amount had been accumulating. He had been threatened with dire consequences if he failed to discharge his debt promptly.

According to the law in existence then, the creditor could get a decree and have the property of the debtor attached. The debtor in this case had no other property except his house and what he dreaded most was to be forced out of the house after the creditor had it auctioned in conformity with the decree. He requested the lawyer to save him from this fate. He painted

such a mournful picture of his difficulties that the lawyer, even though used to such accounts, was really moved with commiseration. Musa Khan put several questions to his client who told him that the sum he had repaid by way of interest exceeded the principal borrowed. Musa Khan was satisfied and asked the client to meet him in the court of the Qazi.

Just before the parties entered the court Musa Khan took his client aside and talked to him for a few minutes. Soon after, the creditor and the debtor were called into the presence of the Qazi. "What is your plaint?" the latter beckoned the money-lender who gave details of the sum owed to him by the shopkeeper. "What have you to say to the charges against you?" said the Qazi to the shopkeeper. The latter twitched the lapel of his tunic but said nothing. The Qazi repeated the question louder to which the shopkeeper replied, "Kapas!"

"What do you say?" asked the Qazi.

The shopkeeper repeated "Ka-p-as!"

The Qazi wrinkled his brow and was about to say something in a stern voice when Musa Khan stepped in and said, "My lord the poor man standing yonder is..."

"Ka-pa-s"

"Innocent and falsely charged."

"Ka-p-as"

"He knows nothing about the matter and has never borrowed money from this man."

"Kapas, kapas."

"He has lost his wits and is in fact stark mad."

"Kapas."

"What does he mean by saying 'Kapas'?" asked the Qazi.

"Kapas."

"What does he mean by saying 'Kapas'?" asked the Qazi.

"Kapas."

"My lord! my client was a merchant in cotton trade. He invested a lot of money in this trade, purchased a great quantity of cotton and stored it in godowns waiting for a favourable rate at which to dispose it of. While he was dreaming of a fortune of..."

"Kapas!"

"My lord, while he was dreaming of a fortune running into lakhs he heard the news that his godowns had been burnt down to ashes. Since then he has been raving."

The Qazi was so impressed that he dismissed the suit of the money-lender and discharged the shopkeeper.

Outside the court the lawyer approached the client saying, "Are you satisfied now? You have been relieved of your worry."

"Ka-pas!" retorted the shopkeeper.

"Come on, let me have my fee now," demanded Musa Khan.

"Ka-p-as!" said the other.

"You don't mean to teach your grandmother how to hatch eggs!" said the lawyer.

"Kapas! kapas!"

"Let me have my fee, you villain."

"Kapas!"

Musa Khan saw into the whole business: he had been beaten with his own stick. He gave him a slap and shouted to the bystanders, "He is hoisting Musa with his own petard of kapas!"

CHAPTER 26

THE DEVIL OUTWITTED

By
S.L. Sadhu

Once there lived a young man in a village. He had no land of his own but worked on the farms of several landlords one after another and thus picked up a living. He was handsome and industrious and entered into matrimony as could be expected. Fortunately his wife was an uncommonly good one. She had attractive features, a strong physique and a sweet disposition—a rare combination. She shared the burdens of her husband and made him happy and somewhat prosperous.

Once, while she was returning from the spring with two pitchers of water—one upon another—on her head in the company of several other women, she and her husband came in for a poignant taunt from her companions. How and why it started is needless to state but in effect they told her that they were landless beggars and had little stake in the village. When she reported the matter to her husband the "earth seemed to slip from under his feet." He had all along been feeling that the landed class, even those petty peasants who could not pay their rent to the State, did not treat him as an equal because he had no land to call his own. The land gave a subtle but respectable status to a tiller of the soil. Minus a piece of land of his own he was like a woman unable to get a husband. Apart from his own feelings on the subject, he was now upset that his wife had got hurt by the unsophisticated though callous observations of the village women- folk.

The peasant was gifted with youth, health and strength. Said he to his wife, "Is that what is worrying you? I never

Anyway, before the year is out, you will also be the owner of a small farm of your own."

She felt somewhat reassured but could not see how it would be possible for him to implement what he said. "May be," she thought, "he has some resources unknown to me." She had grounds for her fears because, as far as she knew, he had had no savings. As a cultivator he was entitled to a share ranging from one half to one third of the produce of the farm he worked on. But prices of agricultural produce were low and did not leave anything by way of surplus. His savings had gone away on the occasion of his marriage when he had to make a settlement on his wife. She also helped her husband in earning their living, but soon came extra mouths to feed in the shape of their offspring and their affairs did not go far on the road to prosperity.

The peasant approached the local patwari with a present and told him everything. The patwari was mighty glad that this latest client would bring him a little money in one form or another.

"I shall make you a peasant-owner" he assured him.

"But I have nothing to purchase it with" rejoined the peasant.

"Don't worry", said the patwari. "When I have given you my word, I shall prove true to it."

The patwari explained to him how he could become a landholder without having to pay the price on the understanding, of course, that the young man would render adequate service to the official. There was a piece of land on the outskirts of the village which was entered as barren in the revenue

records. The patwari advised the young man to reclaim it and assured him that he would help him in owning it in course of time.

The young peasant set about his task with might and main. he was helped by his wife and in a few weeks the land was practically fit for cultivation. The peasant was making preparations for sowing seeds. Late one night he was about to return home from this newly-acquired farm when he found a hen with a number of chicks occupying his path. Surprised to see this brood at such a late hour he was about to make his way when a flock of sheep came within his sight, and he was obliged to go from one side to another and suffer much inconvenience on this account. He walked thus for quite a long time, up hill and down dale, getting his clothes rent by brambles, or suffering from a fall now and then, but he nowhere got near his house. It was dark and he could not make out whereabouts he had been led astray. After a while he saw three or four men coming with a lantern from a distance. He came to know through them that he had strayed quite a few miles from his home to which they escorted him. "It is the devil's doing," they told him.

The next evening when he was about to start from his farm he had some more experiences which the devil alone could cause. He planted his pocket-knife into the ground and sat down. Lo! the devil came forward in the guise of a man with his heels in front and toes pointing backward. The young peasant did not in the least lose his presence of mind.

"What can I do for you, my dear Sir?" he addressed the visitant.

"You have been tilling my farm," replied the other.

"Is that so, but the patwari...."

"To hell with the dishonest rogue!"

"Never mind, my dear Sir, I have all my life been cultivating land for people. Could your honour get a better tenant than this humble servant?"

The devil obviously felt flattered with the respectful attitude of the peasant. "I have no special prejudice against you. Only I thought that a tenant would take the permission of the owner," said he.

"For that transgression I crave the indulgence of your honour's generosity," submitted the peasant. "And what rent may this humble servant be commanded to pay?" he asked.

Obivious of the ironical attitude of the peasant, the devil was taken in and demanded the same rent as other well-known landlords.

"Indeed, Sir, I shall feel it a great honour to render unto your worship one half of the crop, but which half it would please your highness to accept, I pray this humble servant may be commanded, the upper half or the lower half."

"Of course, the upper half," said the devil ingenuously.

"By all means, your highness. When the crop is about to be harvested, will it please you to come and have your share?"

The devil was mighty pleased and disappeared. The peasant left for home with a light heart.

He did not tell anything about the visitation to his wife but decided to raise turnips on his land. The seed was sown and in good time the leaves raised their head from the earth. The devil saw it thus and felt pleased that at last through his wisdom he was making a fortune through labour not his own. Then came

harvest time. The peasant was up and doing, cutting with his sickle the leaves from turnips. A big heap of leaves he piled for the devil and the turnips his wife carried home. While the devil was deliberating how best to dispose of the produce of his land, the leaves started turning yellow and brown. He carried them to the market but the prospective customers only winked to each other or grinned at the wisdom of the seller. "Is it a conspiracy or what?" said the devil to himself, deliberating over his failure to dispose of the turnip leaves.

He came to know ultimately that he had cut a sorry figure on account of his ignorance of farming. "For once this young peasant has scored over me. But none of this more. I shall teach him a lesson now," thought he.

The next sowing season came and the peasant once again asked the devil "Which part of the crop will it please your honour to have?" The devil did not like to give the peasant the impression that he had been worsened and that he was smarting under the discomfiture.

He simply told him that he would take the lower portion.

"By all means, your worship, and this humble servant shall work with utmost zeal to his entire capacity to win the approbation of your honour," said the peasant.

The devil was highly pleased with this unctuous verbiage.

This time the peasant sowed barley and in due course the entire farm was full of green waving crop. It pleased the devil to watch this emerald spot, particularly when the wind forced it to bow to him in courtesy. Gradually the virgin stalks were heavy with ears, and the crop turned yellowish and golden. It was a bumper crop that the peasant raised.

Once again he and his wife got busy with harvesting. They plied their sickless deftly and did a good job of it. Sowing the

stalks into two the peasant took all the ears and the grain leaving the stubble and the roots for the devil. When the latter came to collect it, the peasant respectfully submitted that the entire share was kept for the rightful owner, untouched. And the devil was so glad! But in the market they laughed at his stupidity and he understood that he had been duped once more.

"I must teach this fellow a lesson" said he to himself and he felt relieved to throw the bundle of stubble into the stream. By experience he had found that it was either the root or the top that mattered. To eliminate all risks he determined to have both as his share and leave the middle of the crop to the peasant. And he communicated it to him.

The peasant agreed unhesitatingly. The devil was sure to trip him up. But the peasant had his own plans. This time he sowed maize. The crop was rich and luscious. The stalks grew tall and full of white milky cobs. In time the grains of maize became brown and strong on the cobs. The devil came and got his due, the roots and the lofty crowns; and the peasant bundled together all the stalks in between with the rich cobs growing on them.

The devil soon realized that even the third time he had been defeated. "He is more than a match for me," he came to the conclusion. He called the peasant.

"What is your highness's pleasure?" submitted the latter courteously.

"Pleasure, indeed!" the devil replied. "It is too much for me," he added, "the land and its problems. From this time forth I have absolutely no claim upon your farm and you can do with it what you like."

"Your highness, I am much grateful to you!"

CHAPTER 27

THE HAUNTED MOSQUE

By

S.L. Sadhu

The mosque in one of the villages had remained unattended to for quite a long time. The villagers were awakened to the urgency of repairing and building it and they made preparations accordingly. But the winter set in earlier and it was naturally decided to put off the operations till the dry season. Under the weight of snow part of the roof and one of the walls gave way and people abstained from offering prayers here on account of the hazard involved. They did not think it necessary to light the earthenware lamp in the evening and offered prayers at their respective homes.

Before they could start their repairs the holy month of Ramadhan came round. The villagers were devoutly religious with their simple faith and stout commonsense. It occurred to many of them now that they could not earn merit by keeping fasts without offering prayers in the mosque, and some of them decided not to keep away from the mosque, come what may.

Early in the month of Ramadhan there was great consternation in the village. The village mosque was pronounced to be haunted. On the very first day of the holy month one or two of them died and a couple of them went mad; and these were the very people who had gone there to offer prayers. "They have been devoured by a jinn who haunts the mosque" said the terror-stricken villagers amongst themselves. They went to the vil-

lage headman who, of course, could not offer any ready-made solution to the problem. A conference of the inhabitants was called to find a solution.

Various aspects of the problem were discussed but no solution was in sight. In the past the villagers had tackled many grave issues in such conferences. Once the village had been infested with robbers and the villagers sent them away tripping after a plan had been chalked out at a conference. On another occasion they rid the village and its neighbours of a severe menace of wild beasts that were threatening to destroy both man and his pet animals. But today the problem was entirely different. Mere physical strength was unavailing. What was needed was wisdom of a type of had never been put to test before.

When the conference was about to break up as infructuous a young man offered his services. "I shall endeavour my best to meet him on his own ground provided I have your blessings and cooperation," he said. Who was there amongst them who would not do everything to ensure his success in driving away the common enemy? They wished him god-speed.

The young man called for a wooden hammer, a piece of wood with nails running through it and a pot of kanji. Equipped thus he went into the mosque and found the jinn there. The young man was quite prepared for such an encounter. "How do you do, uncle," said he in an even, confident tone. The jinn saw that this was quite a different sort of man and had to be dealt with differently. "Take a seat, nephew, how do you do!" he replied. While the jinn was about to set him an apparently arduous task the young man said, "Good uncle, where is mine aunt? I trust she is well." The jinn was by no means so chivalrous and was slightly taken by surprise. However, before long he opened his offensive.

"Sweet nephew, will you do your old uncle a good turn?"

"By all means, dear uncle."

"Run your finger nails along my skin while I lie down and gradually stroke the bones on my back with your hand."

A jinn is nothing if not thick-hided and no human being could gratify the jinn's thirst for stroking him. He was known to have exhausted men first, urged them next to re-invigorate their efforts which is impossible for a tired man, accused the victim of having failed in the task set to him and finally punished him.

The young man had, however, already provided against that. The moment the jinn lay down on his side he started stroking him with his hammer. The jinn was really pleased because it was no mere fleshy first that was at work this time. He enjoyed it and forgot his evil purpose for the time being. The young man then picked the small board and began to rub the nails gently along the hide of the jinn. "Dear me! how delicious!" said the jinn enjoying the operation immensely. He was completely disarmed for the moment of his evil designs.

Having made sure of his ground the young man began to press the nail-board home. Scratches deeper and deeper were furrowed into the hide and the jinn began to complain as he felt the pain. "Oh! is it so?" said the young man, "let me wash your body." He rubbed kanji into the scratched skin of the jinn. The jinn was terribly stung all over and was in great agony. The young man now made deft use of his hammer and nail-board and the jinn ran away as fast as he could, shouting that the jinn had been out-jinned. The villagers felt a sigh of relief and the young man came to be commended everywhere. The nambardar declared that he would give him his daughter in marriage. Prayers were offered in the mosque and everyone felt satisfied.

But this feeling of complacency proved to be shortlived. The jinn in agony ran away and found asylum in a desolate forest amongst his fraternity. Seeing him treated thus the other jinns were much upset. "If they start treating us thus," said they, "how long will it be before we are extinct?" It did not require much argument to urge them to take concerted action against the village.

"And who amongst the villagers has treated you thus?" they asked the defeated jinn.

"I can recognize him," he replied.

"Not a trace of him will be left, nor of his relations, for seven, generations. We shall strike hard and strike home."

They invaded the village like a swarm of apes, led by a one-eyed jinn.

There was panic in the village once again, with this difference that its magnitude was unprecedented. On the eve of this invasion of the army of jinns, everyone tried to disclaim his responsibility for the rash indiscretion of the young man. Some of them condemned the young man to escape injury from the jinns and even the nambardar said that he never expected to be landed in this mess. The young man was left almost alone to face the music.

But he never despaired of it. "I'll face them, come what may," he said and selected his weapons. He provided himself with a bag full of ashes and a small tabor and ascended a tall poplar tree. A jinn cannot ascend a tree and till they discovered a means of striking him aloft, he could watch their activities and be forewarned.

The invading army arrived in the village under the leadership of the one-eyed jinn. They made a search for the young

man. "Where is he?" they asked the defeated jinn, "oh, where is he?" How long could the young man escape notice? They spied him and the beaten jinn gave a shout of joy.

"Thou rascal," he cried, "art thou going to impose upon me again?"

The young man kept patiently silent. He was safe unless they felled down the tree and burnt it as no ladder could be found long enough to reach where he was perched.

Well, the jinns began to fumble when they realized that the young man was out of their physical reach. They were mighty jinns but they lacked the petty skill of an insignificant human to go up a tree, and this young man made use of this trick to defy them all. They were not oblivious of the two easy methods of punishing the wrongdoer, by felling the tree or burning it down; but they wanted to catch him alive and make an example of him.

But even a jinn is gifted with intelligence, probably more if he is one-eyed. The last described jinn showed his superiority and leadership. "Let us make a living ladder," he declared, "and I shall form the lowest rung." He stood close to the poplar and caught hold of it with both hands. Another jumped on to his shoulders and paved the way for a third rung of the ladder. In short they began to reach startlingly close to their enemy.

The villagers took it for granted that the jinns would complete their operations and not feel satisfied till they had flung the bones of the young man to the four winds. "He has invited the trouble" was their hushed comment. There was only one among them who was anxious for him and she was the nambardar's daughter whose hand her father had promised to the young man. While all others were sitting in rooms bolted and locked, she was watching the young man on the poplar

and saw with bated breath the progress of the living ladder. It was worse than death for her.

The events took a startlingly new turn. The young man put his weapons to use. He thumped the tabor, taking the jinns by surprise. There was a visible tremor through the living ladder. He undid the knot in the mouth of the bag and ashes fell on the jinns like a Niagara, blinding them. They never expected this reception. The single eye of the lower-most jinn was blinded and he was confused. Then came a loud voice reciting the doggere1:

The tabor goes dub-a-dub-dub and the ashes fall from the tree.

The one-eyed jinn at the lower-most rung, I have grappled with but thee!

The one-eyed jinn was already startled with the drumming; the ashes depriving him of his sight put fear into his heart. These words put him into panic. He felt his feet giving way under him and finally he collapsed. But before he could fall prostrate, the whole living ladder came down crashing and the jinns fell one upon another. While the tabor went on beating dub-a-dub-dub the jinns who had some life left in their bodies took to their heels while a good many left in their carcasses behind, including the one-eyed leader. The young man thus exorcised the jinns away not only from his own village but from many others too; and the nambardar's daughter who had witnessed the terrible scene with her own eyes was ultimately received by the young man in his arms as his all too willing bride.

CHAPTER 28

HIMAL AND NAGRAI

By

S.L. Sadhu

Long long ago there lived a poor Brahman in Kashmir named Soda Ram. Fortune had yoked him to a wife who was ambitious and discontented. She always grumbled for lack of the many requirements of material prosperity and called her husband a foolish drone. She had a terrible tongue which was used to a devastating effect against her husband and became sharper and progressively vitriolic in that exercise. Soda Ram was sick of her and would very much have liked to get rid of her but found no way out. One day when his wife asked him to go to a not distant place to receive alms from a king, he jumped at the proposal, as that would give him a welcome respite for a few days.

He left his home carrying a little food in a small wallet. Travelling some distance in the hot sun he felt tired. Luckily he came to a shady grove of trees near a spring. He put down his small bundle, took his rough meal and lay down for a little rest. Before Soda Ram resumed his journey he saw a serpent come out of the spring and enter the little wallet he carried. An idea flashed across his mind: he would carry the serpent home to sting his wife and thus get rid of her. With trembling hands he closed the mouth of the wallet with a string and returned home with a light heart.

"I have got a precious gift for you," Soda Ram shouted to his wife when he reached home. At first she would not believe it as her husband was the last man to do things that pleased her heart. However, having persuaded her that his bag held the gift, he gave it to her, stepped out of the room and closed the door from outside. When the Brahman lady opened the bag the serpent popped its head out. She shrieked and ran to the door. But it did not open and Soda Ram said, "Let it sting you for aught I care!" The serpent apparently spared the woman and a miracle occurred. A brilliant radiance lit up the whole room and the serpent changed into a little male baby. Even Soda Ram was wonderstruck against his better knowledge. It was a piece of good fortune beyond the wildest dreams of his wife.

In course of time the baby grew into a boy, the beloved of his foster parents to whom he brought great prosperity. He came to be known as Nagrai, the king of serpents. One day he asked his father to take him to a spring of pure water where he wanted to take a bath. His father told him that there was only one such spring but that belonged to the princess and was surrounded by lofty walls. It was so heavily guarded, he told him, that not even a bird was permitted to take flight over it. But Nagrai's curiosity was fanned and he persuaded his father to take him to the outer wall. Reaching there he turned into a serpent, crept in through a crevice into the wall, satisfied his craving for a bath in the limpid spring and returned quietly unobserved.

The next day the illustrious Himal, the daughter of the king, observed that some one had taken a bath in the spring as he had heard the splashing of water. But neither the maids nor the guards had seen any one. Nagrai repeated his visit the next day undetected; but on the day after, Himal caught a glimpse of the intruder and was enthralled by his looks. She at once set a maid servant after him and came to know that he was the son of the Brahman Soda Ram. She was delighted to know that the young man who had won her heart belonged to the same city

as she herself and made up her mind to marry no one except the Brahman boy. Discarding her modesty and the traditional good manners she approached her father in trepidation and broached the subject to him. Her father did not mind her marrying the young man of her own choice but it was ridiculous and humiliating for him to have a poor Brahman for his son-in-law. "How can I show my face to the fellow princes of my caste, or to the courtiers and wazirs?" he reprimanded her. But she was dead set on it. She refused to touch her food or make her toilet till the king granted her her boon. In a few days, realizing the futility of his resistance her father sent for Soda Ram. The latter was already appalled when the king mentioned the subject of the alliance. "I am a poor Brahman, Sire," he said, "and how can I be worthy of such a peerless daughter-in-law." But even he found himself helpless as Nagrai compelled him to give his consent to the alliance which he did reluctantly.

As the wedding day approached Soda Ram was enveloped in gloom. "What a sorry figure shall we cut," he told everyone "when we lead the wedding party into the palace!" But Nagrai told him not to have any anxiety on this score. On the wedding day he gave him a piece of birchbark inscribed with a message and asked him to drop it in a spring. When Soda Ram returned home he felt dazed as he saw a gorgeous palace where he expected his poor hut. He felt convinced that he had lost his way. He also heard the beating of drums and the skirling of pipes inside, and saw caparisoned horses and elephants, guards with glittering uniforms and remainders. From inside came Nagrai befittingly dressed as a princely bridegroom and assured him that all was ready. The whole city was agog with music, feasting and revelry in honour of the wedding of Himal and Nagrai. A new palace was built for them on the river bank where they lived happily.

They were, however, not destined to enjoy their happiness for long. The serpent wives of Nagrai felt forlorn in his absence in the nether world and made efforts to trace him out. One of

them assumed the human form and made inquiries after her husband and learnt of his marriage with Himal. To remind him of his attachment to his serpent-wives she had carried with her a few rare golden vessels of his. Approaching the mansion of Himal she began to hawk her wares. Himal was attracted by her curious and purchased them at a throw-away price. When Nagrai returned she displayed to him the curios. He at once understood the mischief of his serpent-wives, broke the vessels to splinters and warned Himal not to succumb to the tempting talk of such women again. She was puzzled but kept quiet.

Another serpent wife tried a different trick when the first failed. Disguising herself as a cobbler-woman she approached Himal and asked her if she knew of her husband Nagrai the cobbler. "Nagrai is my husband," replied Himal, "but he is a Brahman, son of Soda Ram." "I don't know about that," said the other, "what I know is that Nagrai is my husband and is a cobbler by caste." She saw from Himal's face that her words were beginning to have effect. She added, "You may ask him his caste. But to make sure you may set him the trial. Ask him to plunge into a spring of milk. His body will sink if he be a Brahman. A cobbler's body will float on the surface."

When Nagrai came home Himal asked him to state his caste. He understood that she had been befooled by the serpent-wives and told her so but she insisted that he should undergo the trial to convince her of his caste. All his arguments failed her misgivings. He dipped his feet in a spring full of milk and was pulled down by his serpent-wives. He resisted their pull in the hope that Himal might be satisfied but to no avail. When his knees were immersed he said, "Himal, are you satisfied?" She was not. When his thighs were also immersed he repeated the question but she said nothing. He appealed to Himal again and again when the surface of milk reached his navel, his chest and his chin but her misgivings about his caste were not cleared yet. She realized the gravity of the situation when he was immersed to his forehead. She sprang and tried to

pull him out by the tuft of hair on his head. But it was too late. Nagrai disappeared under the milk and Himal was left only with a tuft of hair in her hand.

Himal was left forlorn. Her grief was beyond words and nothing could console her. She was in dismay and sorrow. The worst of it was that her own folly led to her undoing. To expiate her stupidity she decided to give all her wealth in charity. Everyday she relieved the distress of scores of men and women and gave away every thing she had in silver, gold and jewels till only a golden mortar and pestle was left with her. Once an old man and his daughter came to her for alms. She served them food and he narrated to her that one night he and his daughter lay under a tree near a spring. At midnight they heard a great noise as of an army on the march. Then came a number of servants out of the spring who cleaned the area and cooked a large feast which was served to many guests including a prince. They all disappeared within the spring except their chief. He left a little food under the tree saying "This is in the name of unlucky Himal" and disappeared within the spring.

Himal persuaded the old man to take her to the spring and rewarded him with the remnants of her wealth, the golden mortar and pestle. At night with her own eyes she saw the series of events narrated by the old man. Her nerves were tense and her heart was racing. When Nagrai came out of the spring she prostrated herself at his feet. Nagrai was overcome with emotion but he was afraid that his serpent wives would kill Himal if he took her to his abode. He consoled her and advised her to wait for a month or so till he could make some arrangement for her stay. Himal would brook no further separation from him and coiled herself round his legs. Nagrai was in a pretty fix now. At last he turned her into a pebble, hid her in his turban and went back to his home in the serpent world. His wives began to look askance upon him and accused him of the smell of human flesh in his company. He could conceal the

secret no longer and reconverted her into the human form after they had solemnly promised that they would not molest her. They were highly impressed with her beauty and tenderness and could not help being jealous. As they had solemnly promised Nagrai not to do her any harm they had their revenge by imposing all the culinary drudgery upon her. This princess brought up in a palace with maids and servants to carry out her every whim gladly undertook to look after the kitchen of the serpents. But she had no experience of these affairs and revealed herself to be a clumsy and uncouth cook. One day, while pouring boiled milk into basins to cool it for the serpent children, her ladle accidentally struck one of the vessels. The serpent children mistook it for the usual breakfast gong. They rushed to the kitchen and gulped the hot milk. As a result they died to burns. The serpent wives were overcome with grief. The stung Himal and she died immediately.

Nagrai was overwhelmed with grief but he was helpless. He washed the body of Himal and under pretence of cremating it carried it through the spring. He was so moved by his affection for Himal that he could not stand the idea of consigning it to the flames. Instead, he embalmed it and stretched it on a bed which he placed in a tree nearby. Now and then he would come out of the spring and remorsefully look on the beauty of the dead form. Not long after, a holy man happened to come to the spring and saw the dead body. He was so impressed by the beauty of Himal and the devotion of Nagrai that he gave the body the gift of life. He then carried Himal to his home where the holy man's son was fascinated with her beauty and not knowing her story set his heart on marrying her.

A couple of days later Nagrai came once again out of the spring to draw consolation from a sight of Himal's body. He was grieved to find the body missing and sought to solve the mystery before retiring. He traced her ultimately to the holy man's but where she was lying asleep and was delighted to find her living once again. He did not want to disturb her while

asleep and, therefore, coiled himself near the bed of Himal till she could wake up. In the meantime, the holy man's son entered the cottage and was alarmed to see the snake. He at once realized the significance of the snake and bewailed its unnatural death. "Once again has he suffered for my sake" she mourned. She had the dead snake cremated and ascending the funeral pyre committed herself to the flames as sati. Everyone was moved by their devotion and the sacrifice they made for each other. The holy man was especially remorseful because it was in his hut where Nagrai out of love her Himal had lost his life and this had led to the self-immolation of Himal also. He felt deeply concerned. One day, while he was brooding over this question he heard two birds talking about the love, devotion and sacrifice of Himal and Nagrai. The female bird said to her consort, "Can they ever regain their human form?" "Verily so" replied the latter, "if their ashes are thrown into the spring." The holy man realized that the two birds were none else than Shiva and Parvati. He at once threw the ashes into the spring. Himal and Nagrain came to life in their human form once again and lived without further mishap ever after.

CHAPTER 29

JUST A NIGHTMARE

By

S.L. Sadhu

When all is said and done a nickname is a name, a concrete appellation standing like an unshakable rock in an angry ocean which demolishes and engulfs reputations. Think of such names as William Rufus or Single Speech Hamilton! The nickname enables us not only to pin-point the particular man from among the billions of the dead but also unrolls for our perusal and whole record of his character. What a great bon it, therefore, is for the un-knowing!

Nicknames have had a glorious career in Kashmir. They were invented and applied owing to an inherent necessity if spotting out men and women, or families. With the exception of a few cases what are family names today were but nicknames once. These nicknames have gradually come into their own and attained respectability quite at par with the original family surnames. Surnames like Trambhu (meaning pock marked), Braru (a cat), Dand (a bull), Tak (an earthenware plate), Aima (unbaked), Kotru (pigeon), Kantru (a male sparrow), Khar (an ass), are proudly professed by hundreds of families today. The list could be multiplied a thousand fold. Human deformities like Loung (lame), Shanglu (with six fingers), Kana (with a deformed ear) give rise to many family names today, while other bodily characteristics are responsible for many more like Mota (corpulent one), Nika (a slender one) Chhot (a pygmy), Dandan (one with teeth dropped), Khosa (a

beardless one), Khor (one with scabies).... These families are regarded to be as proud and good as any, and yet nicknames have made many a person miserable.

There was once a peasant in a Kashmir village. He had not much of land and was obliged to spend several months of the year in the city as a domestic servant in one family or another. It was by no means a pleasant experience for him to be at the mercy of his employer and his numerous encumbrances including an aunt, two wives and an indistinguishable brood of children. Getting up early in the morning he, to use his own words, would "get into the harness like the pony dragging a cart." Sweeping the house, several speedy trips to the market, the usual drudgery in the scullery, tending the children, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, making beds, and quite a good deal more was his usual routine. And all the time he had had no tiding the children, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, making beds, and quite a good deal more was his usual routine. And all the time he had had no tidings from his wife and children through out the long winter months.

Is it surprising that he complained of his unenviable lot to many? Among these latter was a shopkeeper from whom this peasant- cum-domestic servant would make purchases for the household of his master. He seemed to be a sympathetic man and offered the other the tube of his hubble bubble at which he would give a few pulls with his ample lungs. "Will you take my advice if I place an inexpensive plan before you of supplementing your meagre income?" said the shopkeeper once. The other jumped at the idea as he was in need of nothing else more earnestly than the means to get rid of the drudgery of domestic service. "All that you do," said the shopkeeper, "is to buy a hen. She can be fed with a few crumbs and will lay eggs. I undertake to make the sale of your eggs for a nominal commission."

The idea of raising poultry was nothing novel for the peasant but he always found it difficult to negotiate a price for the produce. The village shopkeeper got eggs almost for nothing from unsophisticated peasants. Therefore, though rearing of poultry did not cost anything, it meant a lot of bother for little gain, and hence the hesitation in the mind of the peasant to undertake it.

As the shopkeeper promised the peasant to arrange the sale of the produce, the biggest stile in the way of this new undertaking was overcome. Though he had no ready cash he managed to borrow some money to purchase a hen. In due course of time the hen laid eggs and brought a little sum to the peasant. The peasant invested the proceeds in the same business and added to his stock of poultry. His business expanded steadily till by the next fall of winter the peasant felt that he could manage to live without having to go to the city in search of service. It was such a blessing to be spared the drudgery of a domestic servant and the shame of it. The peasant was grateful to his stock of poultry and particularly the first hen with which he made a start.

The first hen happened to be whitish in colour. It was not bright dazzling white but rather the faint pale which left after the other colours had been washed out. The peasant regarded this hen as the harbinger of good fortune to him and wherever he went or whomever he talked to, he had something to say about his white hen, — how it started crowing early in the morning, how it would sometimes strut or cut a graceful caper ... Never did he miss an occasion to say something about the white hen. In course of time the white hen became the talk of the village and the surrounding ones too.

The next stage was to identify the peasant as the owner of the white hen: "M----- has been responsible for such and such an act."

"Which M-----?"

"The one who owns the white hen."

Not long after, however, they omitted to mention the ownership entirely and called him by this very name, the "white hen." This name spread like wild fire in the manner of all nicknames which are always catching. Urchins in the streets and old men near the bank of the stream began to call him by this very name, and this was very irritating. Every time he heard the urchins shouting "white hen" he felt provoked and angry. He was easily put out and wished to crush them to a jelly and retorted with abuse and vituperation. This tickled the urchins and encouraged them to further fire works. Even the grown-ups felt a peculiar pleasure in provoking him.

His susceptibility to excitement on account of the nickname increased tenfold. If he saw two men talking together he suspected that they were plotting to shout "the white hen" behind his back. If he saw people smiling he ran to the conclusion that they were doing so at his expense. This gave people opportunities more and more to fling the nickname at him either in his face or behind his back.

This excitement affected his nerves. "They are bent upon driving me mad," he would blurt out now and then. "Look here," a good friend would tell him, "you are a grown-up man, you should exercise self-restraint and not get upset like a girl of sixteen."

"Self-restraint! Do you talk of self-restraint? Who can exercise it to a greater degree than I do? But how long can I exercise self-restraint when they are bent upon downright abuse? Didn't you hear them shouting 'the white hen'? Rascals. I'll make an example of them," and down he would rush with a stone in his hand against an imaginary foe raising the provocative slogan.

A simple matter took thus a grave and tragic turn. Several times in the day he would imagine people shouting the nickname and out of his house he rushed, set upon "teaching the rogues a lesson." Physicians and sane men came to only one conclusion and that was that a change in the environment alone could save him. He was advised to go out of the village again for some time.

He could have gone to the city to his former employer. But he preferred to go to the plains beyond the mountain walls encircling the valley. He joined one of the gangs of peasants who go out to the plains in the winter to supplement their earning on their lands. He earned a pretty little sum everybody which pleased his heart. But, above all, he was happy because no one in the plains knew the nickname which had almost driven him mad. Those terrible moods of excitement, moments of temporary insanity or depression became a matter of the past and he came almost to believe that life was not so bad.

Several winters passed. In the plains the idea of his former nickname had practically disappeared from his mind, what with the change in the environment and the savings from his wages which had accumulated. The thought of returning home began to stir his heart. This craving became stronger every day till he could no longer resist it. He decided to visit home.

The return journey was quicker and easier, for he could afford to come in a bus. Money was jingling in his pockets. He came to the road crossing whence his village was but a couple of miles distant. He saw several men going to the surrounding villages and they fell a talking.

"Hello! I seem to have seen you and known you but can't place you," said one.

"Indeed so do I. But methinks I saw him several years back," joined another.

"Sure enough, for I am coming from the plains after several year."

"I used to know a fellow who couldn't stand a nickname and left the village. Your face very much reminds me of him. ...Are you by any means the same fellow whom they nicknamed 'the white hen'? He has been missing for many a years now."

"Lord! they are starting it with a vengeance," he thought. "Good friends," he told them, "yes, I am the man who could not stand the nickname 'the white hen' and slipped out to the plains. The craving for my home brought me back. You have restarted the game right now when I have not even stepped into my village. I will go back to the plains and I wish you joy of your homes. Such a place is not for me."

He retraced his steps right then and came back to the plains. And the nickname "the white hen" languished and died.

CHAPTER 30

MAHADEV

By
S.L. Sadhu

Once while Mahadev was sitting amongst his friends who belonged to the same trade as he, the conversation centered on the peculiarities of dress among different people. The Kashmiris never weary of the loose tunic pherans which keep them warm. The people of Jammu, both men and women, have preferred for ages trousers fitting very tight on their legs. These trousers are pretty long and the wrinkles can be made to add grace and give an artistic appearance to the wearer's legs.

The degree of tightness of the trousers was being discussed with some amount of earnestness when somebody hazarded the opinion that no pickpocket could steal a valuable if hidden inside trousers of this kind. Though the general opinion was more or less favourable to such a view, Mahadev's vanity was hurt and he desired the remark to be qualified with an exception in his favour. The company was not prepared to concede it, and thereby provoked Mahadev to contest in hotly.

"The test of your ability, Mahadev," said a veteran comrade, "to pull a thing out of one of the wrinkles of the trousers lies in your hand reaching the object without the wearer being aware of it. Do you say it is possible?"

"Why not?" retorted Mahadev.

The company laughed, and but for his reputation would have ridiculed Mahadev for subscribing to such a view. Mahadev, however, was not put out. He put forth a new theory: "If your hand can't reach the object, what prevents you from pulling the trousers out quietly?"

This was regarded to be equally absurd, considering that the garment is close to the leg almost as another layer of skin. Mahadev was challenged to demonstrate it, for nothing short of that could satisfy his comrades. The test of the operation lay in accomplishing it quietly without disturbing the man wearing it.

"You may, for ought we know, draw it out of a man at the point of the knife," said his comrades.

"How could such a possibility be obviated?" Yes, it flashed across somebody's mind: the ruler himself wore such trousers.

"Mahadev, you will have to prove it by pulling the trousers out of the legs of no less a person than His Highness himself," said they.

Mahadev agreed.

"And the wager?"

"I'll surrender my leadership, shave off my moustaches and pick up a new trade."

They accepted.

Anecdotes of thieves breaking into the palace of a ruling sovereign, though rather rare, are not entirely unheard of; but there is perhaps no instance of a ruler being deprived of his trousers while asleep. It was an impossible task that Mahadev had undertaken; at least some of his comrades felt so and they were looking forward to the day when Mahadev would sur-

render his leadership on oath and expose himself to the banter of his comrades on the loss of his moustaches. Was it a joke to enter into the bedroom of His Highness while all the guards were alert with their rifles and their bayonets? According to the proverb, even birds are afraid to fly over the residence of a ruler, and who was Mahadev, after all?

Probably even Mahadev himself and no idea of the gravity of the task he had volunteered to accomplish, for he found no key to the problem for several weeks. He eagerly pursued the task as an intellectual rather than a physical problem. His task was particularly difficult because the whole retinue of His Highness consisted of his own clansmen of Jammu and others had no access to his private chambers. Mahadev was found by his comrades frequenting the surroundings of the palatial residence of the ruler and they would exchange a significant wink as much as to say, "where are you with your boasts?"

There was a long and narrow street which led to one of the palace entrances. Guards and other retainers of the ruler who lived in the servants' quarters of the palace usually passed along this street to and fro, and a few shops had been set up there to meet their requirements. When off their duty, these retainers would usually come to these shops in business, have long-drawn pulls at the narela or the bigger hubble bubble, give their teeth exercise with gram coated with jaggery and exchange gossip. Among these was a class of servants engaged for massaging the body of His Highness, and gently pressing his limbs before he went to sleep.

Members of the unofficial guild to which Mahadev belonged possess sharp intelligence, quick judgement and a well-developed faulty to win the sympathies of most people. By cultivating these retainers on these shops Mahadev stored his sharp mind with the usual trend of events inside the palace: the time His Highness ate or slept or enjoyed the company of his friends; what upset his temper or what humoured him; how he

spent his day and his night. he carried a small narela and a pouch of tobacco, and the offer of a pull at its tube would easily draw out of these simple hill people their knowledge of the palace.

The ruler was devoted to his faith in the orthodox fashion. It was soon given out that he was proceeding to the shrine called Khir Bhawani so well-known in Kashmir. This shrine was situated on the bank of a tributary of the river Sindh which joined the Jhelum at Shadipur, twelve miles below Srinagar. His Highness' camp moved to the shrine by houseboats, doongas, etc. He freely gave in charity on this occasion and fed every one who came to his kitchen. Having observed a fast and offered worship on the due date, i.e., the eight day of the bright fortnight of Jeth, and having exercised his charity to his heart's content. His Highness proceeded down the Singh towards Srinagar. However, it was usual with him to camp at Shadipur for a few days on his return, and on the occasion to which the story refers, he did not let slip this opportunity for enjoying a little respite from his strenuous duties in the capital.

Mahadev was equally unstinting in showing himself off as a devout follower of his faith and people said that though his means of earning his livelihood were despicable, he seemed to have the heart of a devotee. He fasted on the eight day at the shrine of Khir Bhawani and even served pudding, milk and fruit to the hungry, and this made something of a stir at the sacred spot. He greeted his acquaintances among His Highness' staff with a smiling face.

The next day his boat also halted at Shadipur. The vast State camping ground was covered with many tents pitched for His Highness over whom the majestic chinars stood guard. The ruler here renewed his acquaintance with many of his subjects of this region who came to pay their respects to him and honoured many others by asking their names and other particulars. His subjects were surprised at his sharp memory, for

he remembered the names of many of them and, in several cases, of their fathers too. Of course, there were perfect police arrangements, but he was rather friendly, unassuming and merciful, and his camp never developed the —hush-hush” atmosphere. He gave large sums by way of charity and bakshees.

Mahadev felt at home among the retainers of the ruler and even he came to the camp to offer his respects. He invited one of them to his boat where meat dishes were cooked, the ruler being a strict vegetarian. The man ate to his heart’s content.

It was the duty of this man on this particular day to massage His Highness’ limbs and lull him to sleep. Mahadev secured a set of the garments worn by the retainers with a turban dyed in bright yellow saffron colour. Boldly and cleverly Mahadev managed to slip past the sentries in the disguise of a retainer and got into His Highness’ tent when the latter was already dozing. He began to press his limbs so tenderly that the ruler did not feel any difference in the hands or their movements. He was soon fast asleep.

The servant whose place Mahadev had taken had had a full repast with his friends. To avoid the envy of his comrades he had kept the invitation and its consummation a secret. But soon his mind became deliciously befogged and before he was aware of it, he fell sound asleep. As no need of his service was felt by His Highness, he continued in the earthly abode of bliss for several hours.

Meanwhile, Mahadev made sure that His Highness was fast asleep and that nobody had suspected his presence there. He quietly unpacked a small piece of a wooden tube and directing one end towards the ankles of the august sleeper, one by one, gently blew into it. Several ants who lay imprisoned inside the tube found a welcome release into the tight fitting trousers of the ruler and gradually made their way into the warm interior. They ran up to be disturbed and irritated by such movements?

"Damn these misbegotten insects", said the ruler scratching his legs with his toes, "pull out the trousers".

Mahadev, his life in his hands, was waiting for this golden moment. Smoothly and artfully he pulled the trousers off His Highness' legs. The august sleeper was once again soothed and lulled to deep sleep. Being reassured of his safety, Mahadev slipped out with the prize. His Highness changed clothes every day. The servant who had fallen asleep marked the absence of the trousers but did not report the matter to the high-ups lest his absence from duty be brought to light.

Mahadev went triumphantly to his comrades with the prize. His Highness' trousers were identified, and the outstanding leadership of Mahadev was re-affirmed.

CHAPTER 31

THE PATWARI AND THE INEXPERIENCED VILLAGER

By
S.L. Sadhu

The rural areas in the east have now come to attract an attention unprecedented in our history and numerous officials work for the welfare of the villager. Not many years ago, the patwari was the sole representative of the administration in the countryside. Being conscious of his importance, he exacted homage from high and low alike, and they willingly offered it; in fact they did not feel satisfied till the patwari had accepted their presents. Experience had taught them that it may be possible to change what is written in one's destiny but nobody could rectify the record of a patwari.

There was incontrovertible evidence to support this contention. There was the tehsildar who openly declared himself in favour of a party in a land suit. The patwari had so far adopted a neutral attitude. But when he found the balance tilted against one party without the tehsildar so much as asking his opinion, he made up his mind to help the other party. No doubt he was able to make some money as a result of his policy, but he was able to produce recorded evidence in favour of his party that even the tehsildar himself felt amazed at his own inability to help his own protegee.

Then there was the case of a collector of land revenue to whom the ruler had made a grant of land for his meritorious services to the State. Since the patwari was not in any way obliged to him he submitted a report on the land available in his jurisdiction to the ruler. On the basis of the report the land that the collector got was almost wholly barren and unproductive and did not compensate him even for the land tax. It was on the basis of such facts that the saying went round of the admonishment held out by a revenue minister to one of his relatives in a land suit that even he, the revenue minister himself, could not help him if the patwari willed otherwise.

Such being the power and prestige of a patwari, it was foolish of any villager not to propitiate him and, indeed, idiotic to ignore his presence. There is an ancient saying (*mudan hanza maji nai prasan truken handi gara ketha khasan*), "unless the mothers of blockheads bear children how can the households of the clever thrive," and there was accordingly a vain young man in a village who entirely lacked experience in worldly affairs. He was strong and devoted experience in worldly affairs. He was strong and devoted his time to his farm and his cattle which rewarded him well. Somebody had told him that he must be self-respecting and his notion of self-respect was to mind his own business, earn an honest rupee and let the patwari or other officials stew in their own juices.

The young man was lightly vain and certainly impolitic, and he had created jealousy in the minds of many fellow-villagers. They approached the patwari to pull the young man's ears. But the patwari was shrewd and advised them to be patient. He had a grouse of his own. Apart from the fact that the young man never offered any present to him his whole bearing was almost insulting. He never wished the patwari and to use his own words, "he walked with his gaze fixed on the sky." This, according to the patwari, was calculated to undermine his prestige.

The patwari had cautioned his friends to wait till the time was ripe and he started his offensive when it was so. He did not, however, take them into his confidence, for that did not suit his strategy.

Once when the young man crossed his way, the patwari greeted him in a tone of warmth and affection. "You do not know me well, but your father was a dear friend of mine," he told him. "I cherish the memory of that friendship," he continued, "and as a friend of your late father I have something to say in confidence."

What he told him in confidence was that an unclaimed piece of land lay in the village which was open for any one to bring under cultivation as a first step towards establishing his claim over it and out of deference for the friendship of his father the patwari was making the offer to him. "I can assure you," he said, "that I have not the least interest in it and as somebody will ultimately take it up, why not you do it?"

The young man saw the bright prospect of getting a piece of land for nothing and was tempted. Taken in by the profession of friendship made by the patwari he set about establishing his claim over it. He brought it under the plough, watered it and put a flimsy fence around it. He also sowed seeds.

All this time the patwari was quiet. The young man's attitude towards him had by now undergone an change. He respected the patwari and even threw to him an invitation to dinner as the only means of strengthening the bonds of friendship and affection between the two families. Everything seemed to be so nicely arranged till the seeds sprouted and tiny seedlings gave a nice appearance to the piece of land. Then one morning when the young man went to the field perhaps to do some weeding out he found another man doing it there for him.

"What are you doing there?" he demanded. There was no answer.

"Oh, I say, what the hell are you doing there?" he repeated.

"Why, do you not see, I am pulling out the weeds from the field."

"But I never asked you to do so."

"Who the devil are you to ask me to? I can do what I like to my own land without asking for your orders."

"But I ploughed it, sowed the seeds and put up a fence around it."

"You are raving, that is what you are. The land belonged to a collateral of mine and I have inherited it...."

By this time a few people collected there and the two saw the claimants coming to fists. Peace was restored with some difficulty and it was decided that both parties should approach the patwari. They did so but the latter had left for some other village in his jurisdiction. When he returned late at night the young man was already waiting for him. The patwari heard his narrative and said:

"Did you not plough the land?"

"Yes."

"Did you not sow the seeds and raise the fence?"

"That I did."

"Did anybody object to your doing so?"

"None indeed."

"Your claim is thus established and no one can dispute it."

The young man left his place satisfied. The next morning the other claimant also left the presence of the patwari fully satisfied. During the day, however, the two claimants fought with fists and shoes and cudgels and were with great difficulty prevented from using scythes and shovels. There was great apprehension of breach of the peace and ultimately the parties had to approach the court.

The court took a long time in recording evidence, examining documents and sifting revenue papers. All this while these parties had to woo the patwari for his support. Not only was his palm greased and overgreased but he was frequently a guest of honour at the house of the one or the other claimant. The vain young man's behaviour had undergone a change. The villagers could not help giggling when they saw the person who fixed his gaze on the stars once contemptuously ignoring the patwari, follow him like a lamb. And the patwari had a peculiar wink in his eye indicating as much as: "Do you see how humbled is the haughty wight? Others beware betimes." It was a long drawn out suit and the patwari was transferred during the time it was pending. What happened to them he never bothered about.

CHAPTER 32

THE SON-IN-LAW

By

S.L. Sadhu

Qadira lived in the house of the great Sheikh as did his father. The latter was first employed in the household as a groom. His wife died in the village to which the family belonged and the stable-man brought the little boy to live in the house of the nobleman. Here he assisted his father in the stable and sometimes was entrusted with errands by the ladies of the household. His chief claim to his board and lodge with the illustrious family was his companionship with the young Sheikh, the nobleman's son. The latter was practically of the same age and grew so fond of the urchin that he would never brook separation from him except when the former was engaged in assisting his father in cleaning the stables or grooming the ponies.

Though Qadira had to remove horse-dung from the stable or to attend to other unpleasant duties he kept himself unusually clean. His father persuaded him to wash his clothes frequently. In winter when it was cold he went to the bath and made free use of the warm water in the boiler after other members of the household went to bed. Those who did not know him could hardly suspect that he was a stable-boy. Those who saw him frequently always quoted the Kashmiri adage that one should wash one's hands clean before touching him.

Well, Qudira was a groom and errand-boy in the house of the Sheikh and a companion of the nobleman's son. It was never intended, that Qadira should receive any bookish education. But being exposed to it in the company of the young Sheikh he could not help remembering the same lessons and picking up literacy. His blue-blooded companion was a boy of varied interests as befitted the scion of the great house; he could, therefore, pay only scant attention to his studies. Qadira's mind, on the other hand seemed to be so constituted that letters, sentences and whole lessons found a fertile soil there. If the money spent over the young master of the house did not yield result commensurate with its magnitude, it at least made up through the education of the rustic urchin.

Qudira grew into a shrewd lad. he could strike a good bargain and gained advantage by his boldness and dash where faint-hearted men older in age failed. Before very long he was promoted to assist the bailiff and keep accounts. This was a signal advance in his position which delighted his father but filled other domestics with pangs of jealousy. He discharged his duties admirably and his master was pleased with him mighty well. he never made any secret of his appreciation of Qadira's ability.

One day Qadira's father saw his master in a jovial mood and was assiduous in keeping his exalted spirits aloft. When he perceived that the moment was opportune, he said, "Sire, may I make a humble request?"

"Do so, for I am much indebted to you and your son for your faithful service. What do you want?"

"Father," said the servant, "I have grown grey eating your salt. It is my great good fortune. My son has bloomed into a young man eating your bread. While it is my ambition to lay down my life in your service, I request you to seek a job in the

administration for your slave, my son. I do not quite relish his being here."

He told his master how other servants in his household felt jealous of father and son, and cursed them behind their backs. "I can stand anything except a curse against my only son." His words moved the heart of the Sheikh, who himself had only one son. In his own heart he had an additional motive and that was to gain respectability in the eyes of society. Before long the Sheikh, a big feudal lord got Ghulam Qadir, the son of his trusted servant appointed as a clerk in the office of the district collector who was only too pleased to embrace a chance to oblige a big landlord like the influential Sheikh.

Ghulam Qadir was an intelligent clerk and came to have a reputation for efficient work. He disposed of the work allotted to him in no time every day and was also able to assist other clerks in the disposal of their cases. Consequently he got to know the work in all sections of the office which gave him a sort of a key-position. Other clerks sought his advice when baffled with difficulties. Intricate cases could not be attended to without his consultation and apparently insurmountable difficulties were smoothed out by him in no time. The district collector was pleased with him and appointed him as his own munshi or confidential clerk.

Munshi ghulam Qadir, or Munshi Ji as he came to be called now, had learnt another precious lesson by instinct and that was that "more things are wrought by establishing proper public relations than this world dreams of." Accordingly he went to the residence of the collector now and then with a case of choice luscious apples, fine walnuts or a *khirwar* of *mushkbudji* rice. The collector would not accept such a present from his humble clerk, but he had no hesitation when he heard that it came from the great Sheikh. There was, therefore, little doubt that the Munshi would race along the roads to prosperity along which others were panting on leaden feet or merely limp-

ing. In a year or so the Munshi found himself transferred to the executive line as a girdawar with a score of patwaris under him.

Ghulam Qadir now found it necessary to come to the notice of the hakim-e-ala or the provincial governor and he sought the good offices of his erstwhile master, the Sheikh. Not long after, the governor went on a tour of the part of the county where the Sheikh had his estate. It was in his own interest for the latter to entertain the governor. At a dinner held in honour of the governor the Sheikh commended his protege to the kind attention of his august guest. Munshi Ji was in need of just this introduction. He won his place nearer and nearer to the heart of the governor by the efficient discharge of his duties. The governor also received occasional presents from the Sheikh and he was intelligent enough to understand that the latter would feel obliged if he pushed up Ghulam Qadir. In a couple of years, therefore, he got him appointed as a naib-tehsildar.

The old groom in the house of the Sheikh was beside himself with joy and urged his son to take steps to settle himself in married life. Ghulam Qadir, however, was not satisfied yet and considered such a development premature. He had a higher ambition and marriage, he felt, would hinder rather than help its realization. He picked up the ins and outs of his new job till he felt confident that he could hold his own against even the veterans amongst his subordinates. he prepared to win the good graces of the mashir-i-mal, the supreme head of the revenue administration of the State. This time he did not trouble the Sheikh himself but played his cards to well that the governor offered his good offices to introduce him to the mashir-i-mal as a relative of the great Sheikh. This done, the mashir-i-mal found the young man very useful. If eminent people came from outside the State as guests of the administrator, Ghulam Qadir saw to it that they were comfortably lodged and looked after; if there was a wedding or a festival in his house, Ghulam Qadir lost no time in making arrangement

for the purchase of commodities of the finest quality. Besides, the Sheikh was eminent enough to include the administrator in the circle of his friends and suitable gifts were gratefully accepted by him from the former. It was, of course, Ghulam Qadir though whom such gifts were received and the latter's name had therefore grown familiar to the mashir-i-mal.

The Sheikh once called on the mashir-i-mal and Ghulam Qadir too figured in the conversation. "I have not been able to do anything for your kinsman," said the minister. The Sheikh spoke courteously meaning that it was never too late to begin. A couple of days later when Ghulam Qadir saw the mashir-i-mal in the course of his official duty the former put him the question: "How are you related to the Sheikh?" After a slight demur he replied "I am his son-in-law, sir."

"Oh really!" observed the minister. "I am very sorry. I have not been able to do anything for you. Please convey my apologies to your father-in-law. I shall try my utmost to find a way to help you."

In a week or so Ghulam Qadir became a tehsildar. The minister sent a message to the Sheikh expressing the hope that he would feel somewhat satisfied at the promotion of his relation, adding that he had learnt of their intimacy only a few days earlier.

When Ghulam Qadir met the Sheikh next he asked him how he had described his relationship with himself. Ghulam Qadir was silent. The Sheikh reiterated his question but the other was still hesitant. "You had better kill me sir," replied Ghulam Qadir. But the Sheikh was eager and promised to forgive him. It was then that Ghulam Qadir revealed the truth.

"Son ...in... law!" His face turned red in anger. But that was not for long, for he added, "You have reached your present position through hard work and intelligence while my own son

has come to no good. I really could not get a better son-in-law. You are my son-in-law indeed," and he determined to entrust his daughter to him.

Thus did the groom's son marry the daughter of his master. It was a proud day for the groom and prouder still for the Sheikh.

CHAPTER 33

THE TWO THUGS

By
S.L. Sadhu

There was once a thug who plied his trade with reasonable efficiency and success. He was a past master in the art of creating illusions which is the basis of the trade of a thug. Perhaps the most paying line of the business would be to sell brass for gold; but in such a transaction people secure the advice of a reliable goldsmith. The thug called himself a tradesman. If anybody asked him, "What do you deal in?" "Whatever holds the promise of a meagre profit", he would reply, thus reserving to himself the right of dealing in any commodity he liked, from oilseeds to pashmina, from saffron to sandalwood.

It was not his way to keep his wares in a shop for sale. Indeed, he never made use of a permanent premise as a shop. He sojourned to different places of pilgrimage or fairs as Tsrarisharief, Pakharpora, Aishmukam, Anantnag, Bomai, Badgam, Handwara, Trehgam, Tulamula, where people collected in tens of thousands for a few days and brisk marketing took place. They were in a mood to spend without undue higgling and that is what the thug took advantage of. He also hawked his wares from street to street, or engaged a little dinghy occasionally to acquaint the naive boatwomen on the waterways of Kashmir with the wealth and quality of his merchandise.

Once the thug joined the fair at the far off shrine of the saint of Bomai. There were lots of people come from distant villages to pay their homage to the memory of the saint. There were musicians and singers entertaining the onlookers with their naat and quwali; there were wrestlers come for their annual meet; there were bhands or itinerant actors, and there were magicians beguiling the people with the sleight of their hands. There, of course, were hundreds of tradesmen buying from and selling to thousands of villagers: the carpenter with his toys, yardsticks, balance-beams, teasers and winders, grain-measures, ladles, sandals, etc., the smith with his knives, scythes, spinning rods, cauldrons, horse-shoes, tongs, etc.; the glib-tongued tradesman purchasing thick woollen blankets from peasants, the agents of the fat and immobile mutton dealers of the city bargaining for herds of sheep and goats, confectioners, clothiers, sharpeners with their circular whetstones mounted on an axle, and, of course, shapers.

The thug had also wended his way thither according to an itinerary fixed well beforehand. He was dressed as a peasant and carried a medium-sized wallet besides his blanket. He had taken his seat on the ground at one end of the crowd. By chance another peasant carrying a bigger sack took his seat near him.

"How do you do?" the latter greeted the former.

"God's mercy," replied the other.

"My good friend, where do you come from to this holiest of the shrines?" asked the former.

"I come from the distant maraz."

"I could guess as much from your talk and the look of weariness from your face."

"Yes, I had to foot a pretty long distance. And you yourself?"

"I belong to the blessed Kamraz, the region of droughts, poverty and lawlessness. How much land do you own?"

"Not much by your standards. Actually I come from Pam-pur where I own a few marlas of saffron-growing land. I have managed to collect a little of this precious stuff in this wallet. What is your sack bulging with?"

"The arid tableland of the village where I work yields little. So I usually go to Pindi in winter and earn a little to spread over the whole year round. This year I was working with a merchant who paid me kind. I have earned this sackful of peppercorns for six months which I shall now exchange for cash or kind. Are you interested?"

"I have myself to dispose of my wallet full of saffron and I intended to carry home in return dried fish, dried caltrops, sesame and other produce of your region. But it occurs to me that if I happen to get a suitable customer for my saffron I may as well settle a bargain to relieve you of your heavy load."

"As you please. But why seek another customer? Why not exchange our precious commodities without getting in a middleman?"

"It is well for you to regard my saffron no more precious than your peppercorns, but I am no fool to be taken in thus. Let us settle a price."

"I have not much experience in evaluating commodities. If you don't fancy my heavy sackful of peppercorns in return for your light wallet of saffron, you may as well look for a great queen to purchase your precious commodity."

This sort of conversation was carried on for a pretty long time, each one of them playing his role perfectly and camouflaging the intonation and uttering the words peculiar to the region adopted by him. There was a good deal of higgling on the part of the Pampur man who lifted the sack of peppercorns to judge its weight. The other man fumbled the outside of the wallet of saffron. "Do you doubt the genuineness of what I carry?" asked he as he tonged his fingers in to draw a pinch of saffron. "Look, he continued, "hast ever seen genuine saffron as this?" And he trotted out like a practised dealer the Persian adage *mushk aan ast ki khud biboyad na ki ataar bigoyed* (fragrance will out and needs no eulogies from the perfumer).

"Aye, aye! but the wise have cautioned us not to relax against any gundum numa jaw farosh that may be prowling," retaliated the other.

The deal was finally closed and the Pampur man came away with the sackful of peppercorn while the other one was happy with his wallet of saffron. The former retired to a grove of trees and began to examine the contents of his sack. there were round berries of peppercorn genuine enough at the top but beneath that layer there was sheep dung. The worst suspicions of the thug were confirmed, for by an irony of circumstances he had met a fellow of the same trade upon whom he had foisted paddy husk covered with a thin layer of saffron. "I shall renew my acquaintance with him," he said in the spirit of, "I shall meet thee at Phillipe."

Before long the two tradesmen met at another fair but spoke not a word about their previous transaction. They came to be known as Toh thug and Mengan thug after toh or paddy husk and menghan or sheep dung that each tried to pass on to the other. They tried to play other tricks on each other to establish their individual superiority but not once was either of them caught unawares. In course of time they developed friendship and some affection, for they were fellow townsmen. But being

men of the same trade they could not overcome their mutual jealousy and spirit of rivalry.

One day Toh thug called on his friend and found him laid down in bed with fever. The visits were repeated, for Toh thug saw it as his duty to ask after the health of his friend. There was, however, no improvement. Every time he touched the wrist of Mengan thug, he found his heart beating fast. "My end is come," said Mengan thug, "for I have never been so ill, nor for such a long time."

"Don't worry, friend, you will soon get well," consoled the other.

"I know better. The hakim has not been able to diagnose the malady. It is the angel of death that has taken his seat in my pulse."

"Oh! Why do you talk so wild? You must give the physician time to harmonise your rebellious humours."

"I am not a child that you try to console me. I have fallen on evil days besides and have not a pice left for my treatment. What can save me then?"

"Be cheerful, friend, you should not burden your heart with unnecessary anxieties. If you are really hard up why don't you ask me to lend you a helping hand?"

"You know the sort of person I am. I feel really ashamed to stretch my hand for help."

The upshot was that Toh thug passed on to his friend a sum of about two hundred rupees as a loan which the latter gratefully received. But Mengan thug did not get well. His fever continued to rage though his face did not indicate any remarkable trace of emaciation. One fine morning a message

came to Toh thug that his friend had passed away. The former was really sorry though it occurred to him that he (the deceased) had met the death deserved by all swindlers. His own deeds appeared to him innocuous in comparison. It also appeared to him that he had lost the amount offered as loan to his ailing friend. That Mengan thug had not shown any traces of grave illness on his face, however, struck him as odd. "For aught I know, it may be a trick to defraud me of my money....No, he could not have been so bad, peace be to his soul....."

He went to the house of his friend where they were about to dispose of the dead body. To ensure against any tricks Toh thug used unusually hot water to give the body a wash but not a muscle twitched on the naked body of Mengan thug. Ultimately the dead body of the thug was buried and Toh thug was left mourning.

In a couple of days Toh thug was bewildered to learn that the body of Mengan thug had disappeared from the grave. "I know the rascal was pretending all this to defraud me," he said. "He has hurled dust into my eyes and made away with my money. I'm beaten, I must own. Think of it! The feverish pulse and then the stiff carcass." He learnt that Mengan thug had developed a feverish condition with the help of an onion to fake death. "I am immature and raw," he said as he carried a note to place in the house of his friend. "You've beaten me out-right," the note said.

In a week's time he got back his money.

CHAPTER 34

THE VILLAGE TEACHER

By
S.L. Sadhu

The village about which this story is related maintained a school where education in the traditional manner was imparted to village boys. The old white-bearded teacher who taught at the school for thirty years had passed away, much to the regret of the villagers. He had perhaps never taught more than three or four pupils at a time, but his culture and good breeding won him a warm niche in every heart. He was succeeded by another gentleman from a neighbouring village.

The new teacher was a young man. He was gifted with all those qualities which make us look wistfully on our departed youth: energy, health, ambition, hope and vanity. Since his pedagogic duties did not tax his energy to any extent, he interested himself in other activities and was fond of the company of young men. In the midst of his friends nothing would distinguish him from the brotherhood of the laity. He even disclosed a strain of gallantry in his nature. Some elderly people recalled the fatherly attitude of his predecessor and sighed that even those who were expected to set the standard in public behaviour failed to maintain proper decorum.

The life lived by a woman in the city is different from that of her sister in the village. In a city the standard is set by the official class who for this purpose may be said to include the business and professional class too. Till recently their women-

folk, both Hindu and Muslim, lived in purdah and would not leave the four walls of the house except with a veil hanging down to their toes. There is no question at all of their talking to a stranger, however good-natured he may be. The village woman, on the other hand, is free from many of the taboos in the city. She moves about freely and goody goody modesty is alien to her unsophisticated nature. Her conduct is a true reflection of her nature and not qualified by the fear of Mrs. Grundy. She is mostly a working woman assisting her husband in the fields or tending cattle on the outskirts of the village. She will meet anybody unflinchingly, be he a robber or even the devil, and not faint with fear like some of her sophisticated sisters living in towns behind latticed curtains. In spite of that, however, her conduct is unblemished.

The schoolmaster referred to above had certain preconceived and illusory notions about village women. He thought he could play the gallant and thus tickle his vanity. Women move about freely in villages and his own movements were so timed as to cross a number of them on the road when they proceeded to their farms. Sometimes he contrived to enter into conversation with one either on the roadside or at the village spring where they went daily to fetch water. There was nothing indecent in his behaviour but it sprang from a motive which did not appear to be "brotherly" as was the case with the village folk.

There was, in particular, a housewife, both pretty and prosperous whose acquaintance and friendship he wanted to cultivate. On several occasions he tried to enter into conversation with her. She never resented such an attempt on his part but, so far as she was concerned, the matter ended there for her. It never paved the way for a friendship or even what may be called an acquaintance because the next time he had to begin once again from the lowest rung.

Finding no indication of progress in this way he changed his line of action. The young boy of the housewife attended the school where the teacher taught. The teacher frequently said to the boy "Remember me to your mother". The boy carried the message as charged. The mother realized that the teacher needed a purge for his humour and she chalked out her line of action. She told her boy to inform the teacher that she wanted to have a word with him at her house. It was conveyed to him that her husband was expected to be away for the whole day.

The heart of the teacher fluttered like a bird when he got the message. He felt highly excited and in his best attire went too early for the appointment. The housewife gave him a reception that seemed to lack nothing in warmth. She seemed to have placed full confidence in his friendship and gallantry. He could not conceal the lasciviousness in his looks and she reciprocated by pretending to gaze at him fondly. She busied herself in making tea for him and offered him a cupful.

While the cup brimful with tea was steaming in the hands of the teacher, a most unwelcome visitor arrived in the person of the owner of the house, viz., the husband. The teacher did not seem to be taken by surprise because the presence of the housewife had dilated his spirit and elated his vanity. The husband called his wife in a gruff voice from the yard. The housewife began to tremble and turned pale.

"I am undone," she whispered, "if he discovers you here he will kill me and not spare you either."

"Have no fear," said the teacher in a voice that flattered, "he cannot be so harsh."

"I know better how ruthless he is. Would to God I were dead rather than be surprised in this compromising situation." She began to beat her breast. "O quick, save my life" she

whispered in a commotion which was now instilled into the teacher's heart.

"Is there no other exit?"

"No, none. He sees you here and I am killed. He is such a rough bear. Nothing can save me unless....." she began to wail in a hushed voice.

"Unless what?"

"Unless you disguise yourself to escape his suspicion."

"Most willingly. I'll do anything for your sake," said the teacher out of a sense of gallantry and a trace of relief that a way out was indicated.

In a jiffy the housewife gave him a working woman's cloak and scarf which he donned as quickly, casting off his own turban and cloak which she put away. To allay all traces of suspicion in her husband she placed before him a basketfull of maize and two portable millstones. They almost acted a pantomime. She impressed upon him that he must look bashfully downwards, rotate the upper millstone and turn out the yellow flour. Needless to say that the other obeyed. Having accomplished all this she came downstairs to meet her husband so that he did not get a chance to suspect that the teacher was in the person of the working woman turning out flour.

The housewife greeted her husband with a face beaming with smiles. "What is that grinding sound upstairs?" growled the husband. "It is that deaf woman turning out maize flour", she replied aloud..

The husband and wife stayed pretty long in the kitchen garden and in the barn. The sound of grinding continued to come from upstairs though it was slow and punctuated with

intervals of silence. The teacher developed many blisters on his hands. He thought of slipping away but knew nothing about where his turban, scarf and tunic had been deposited without which he was sure to attract the attention of the pariah dog no less than of man.

"The fellow must be tired now and feeling bitter" said her husband to the housewife, "you had better dismiss him now. The lesson must have gone home to him." The housewife gave the captive his clothes and the teacher slipped away without exchanging another word.

It was remarked by many people the next day that the teacher had lost much of his liveliness. His spirit had been clouded by a sort of an eclipse. But nobody knew why, for neither the housewife nor her husband revealed the secret of the "deaf woman" grinding maize. One day the housewife sent a message to the schoolmaster desiring him to repeat the visit. The boy conveyed the message but now the teacher felt no excitement. All that he said was, "Ask her if she has consumed the flour ground previously."

CHAPTER 35

FOLKLORE OF KASHMIR

By
S.N. Dhar

It has been mentioned how Somadeva's classic, *Katha-Sarita-Sagar*, became the source material of folk-tales in most Indian languages. Of primary importance to the folklorist, the folk-tale exercises a peculiar charm over people of all ages, in all climes and countries. Kashmir has an inexhaustable fund of folk-tales. They are, as folklorists have it, as old as the rocks. Many of the folk-tales of Kashmir like "Himal and Nagiray", "Zohra Khotan and Haya Bund", "Gulala Shah", etc. are distinctly Kashmiri in origin. (Among these, "Himal and Nagiray" has been rendered into Kashmiri and Persian verse). Others, which constitute the large majority, are variants of popular tales of the East and the West.

Common denominator

It is interesting to underline points common to folk-tales of Kashmir and the rest of the world. The demon or the lion or tigress, giving a tuft of hair or some such token to the ingratiating hero, to whom it serves as a useful charm, is a device common to eastern (including Kashmiri and other Indian) and western tales. The charming ring of Alladin has many interesting variants in folk-tales of Kashmir. Besides, there are legends of man-eating monsters in every country, whom the hero kills by ingenious means. These cannibal demons or vampires, for that matter, might have been a species of some mythical

animal, whose fear universally persisted in the common man. The less awesome creature like Makara—half bird, half crocodile—was given other forms like half antelope and half fish, as the myth spread from India, influencing people's lore and arts as far removed as Java, Mongolia and China. The popular heroes, semi-historical or otherwise, who destroyed these terrors, won applause from the folk the world over. Apollo killed Python. Hercules was the dragon-slayer. So were Beowulf and the heroes of "Percy's Reliques", in England, and Thor in Scandinavia. Variants of these legendary figures, woven into interesting stories, are to be found in Dravidian, German, Turkish, Tibetan and Kashmiri tales. The common denominator is an exoatic admixture of the miraculous and the familiar, the myth and the reality. The hearer is transported into a new world, suspended between the known and an Utopia.

In Zohra Khotan and Haya Bund, a purely Kashmiri tale, Zohra Khotan—pursued relentlessly by a rich tyrant of a merchant—collects earth, shapes it into a clay head and invokes God to transform it into her own head. God grants her prayer, to preserve her chastity. To clay changes into Zohra's head, dripping with blood. "Take this," she tells the soldier, "and give it to the merchant." The soldier departs with the head. This anecdote is typically Kashmiri, where occultism has deep roots. A combination of mystic and sorcerous factors have subscribed in good measure to determine the ethos of the folk life.

The Hatim or Harishchandra type of king, whose charity is unflagging even in the most trying circumstances, occurs in Kashmiri as in many Indian and a number of Asian tales. Through their poet-historian, Kalhana, Kashmiris know about and have stories about Vinaditya, the saint-king, of Kashmir, who lived on the produce of his own farming. Then there are the exploits of the mythical hero, who has the ability to transform himself into anything in the natural or the supernatural world. These have a familiar ring to the readers of the Arabian Nights and epics of the Hindus as well as Katha-Sarita-Sagar.

Monsters of different varieties, vampires, ghouls and goblins occur in Somadeva's stories. Self-transformation is the essential theme of the 'swan- maiden' stories in *Katha-Sarita-Sagar*. In other Kashmiri, as in Asian tales, the protagonist dons a cap to make himself invisible to execute his plans. Naga or snake—also means 'a spring' in Kashmiri—is peculiar to Kashmiri and Bengali tales. The wife of Kashyapa—after whom, according to legend, Kashmir is named, Kashyapa-Mir, 'the land of Kashyapa'—was the mother of Nagas, who peopled Patala, the region below the earth. The lover of Himal (in the representative Kashmiri folktale, Himal and Nagiray) is Nagiray, the serpent-monarch, who assumed human form on the earth, but was otherwise a snake in his spring. (A spring near Pampur, a village near Srinagar, famous for saffron fields, is still attributed to Nagiray).

Delightful replicas of Shabrang, Prince-Thief of Kashmir, are to be found in Norse, Dravidian and Chinese tales. (Many a Kashmiri tale has the pleasant spontaneity of Norse tales). Ashraf of the Punjab folk-tale is a near echo of Saraf of Kashmir. The robber of 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves' of the Arabian Nights has parallels in many Kashmiri and other Indian tales. Thieves, cut-throats, harlots and opium-addicts abound in the stories of *Katha-Sarita-Sagar*. To come to recent times, intriguing stories of thieves like Laiq Tsur and his famous 'pupil', Mahadev Bhishta—the 'Robinhood of Kashmir'—are current in village and urban homes of Kashmir.

The prose of Kashmiri folk-tales is picturesequely colloquial. Nature's bountiful charms of the "Vale of Cashmere" add not a little to the beauty of the figure and the aptness of the diction. The faithfulness of the folk to the narrative is striking. It is largely the rural folk, young and old, who have preserved these treasures of the literature of the people in a mostly undiluted form. An old peasant, narrating a folk-tale, often interperses it with fragments of narrative poetry which render the telling more effective.

FOLK-SONGS

In the Elysian habital of Kashmir, with its abundant beauties of nature and man, it was but natural for some unknown folk-bard to have started the vogue of folk-songs, that was destined to become immortal.

Folk-songs in Kashmir, as elsewhere, show, and to some extent, preserve the myths, customs, traditions and ways of life of bygone days. The songs and tunes are as compelling in their appeal as other forms of verbal folk arts, folk-tales and proverbs. The beliefs and manners of Kashmiris are worthily embalmed in their folk-songs, which also mirror the chequered national history of the Valley. Folk verse also perpetuates the memory of calamities like floods and famines, foreign invasions, tyranny of rulers, etc. The songs correspond to the description of folk-songs of Paul Lafargue, the Russian poet: "The folk-song is the true, original and natural expression of the people's soul, its companion in joy and sorrow, the encyclopaedia of its religion, the philosophy, the treasure-house to which it commits its faith, its family and national history." The folk-songs is, of course, part of folk culture, which is distinct from that of cities.

Variety

Kashmiri folk-songs are current in almost every Kashmiri home, particularly in the rural areas. The songs present considerable variety in theme, content and form. The broad classification of the songs is: (1) Love songs (Lol-gevun), (2) Ruf dance songs, (3) Pastoral songs, (4) Boatmen's songs, (5) Spring songs (sont gevun), (6) Harvest songs (Lon-nuk gevun), (7) Children's sporting songs (Gindan gevun), (8) Wedding songs (Vanvun), (9) Sacred Thread ceremony songs (Yagnopavit gevun), (10) Semi-mystic songs (current among the village holy men), (11) Opera songs (Band Jashan), (12) Dancer's songs (Bach Nagma Jashan), (13) Ballads (called Bath or Kath, literally meaning

stories), (14) Cradle songs, lullaby, nursery rhymes (called Lalavun, meaning, to lull), and (19) Dirges (Van).

Besides the boatmen's songs, mentioned already, there are songs galore sung to the accompaniment of certain occupations, Seed- sowers, harvesters, embroiderers, papier-mache makers, saffron reapes, shepherds, village belles fetching water, grinding, spinning yarn, or stacking paddy, or labourers doing the chores, sing their different occupational folk-songs in chorus.

Yet others are sung as lullabies or cradle-songs, or at the birth and the naming of a child or at its circumcision (in the case of Muslims) or the 'sacred thread' (Hindu) ceremonies. Then there are wedding songs sung in chorus by women at and before a marriage ceremony. Dirges, known as Van, are recited in chorus by women of the family after the death of old persons. Variegated beauties of nature that surround the countryside form the theme of many a folk-song. Practically nothing is beyond the scope of the versicle rendering of the rustic Muse, from subtle, philosophical thoughts to the romance and tragedy of love.

An important ingredient of folk culture, the folk-song may have diction, content and tone that differentiate it from the city product. Yet each form of song is suited to its theme, be it light, serious or any other. In most love songs, the woman offers her heart—the complaints and the outpourings of an unfathomable, jilted heart. Unlike the Dogra or Rajput heroines, the Kashmiri heroine is mostly the spirit of love and beauty, rarely the mother of heroes. There are no songs about the lives of the brave queens, Didda or Kota Rani, who saved the country in their respective times. The folk-songs thus mostly speak of the moods of love, marriage and other family occasions, the beauty of the seasons or the Elysian environment of the Valley. And, generally, they are racy, rhythmic and vivacious—latterly, justly popularised by the TV all over India. The exquisite singing quality of the songs is often appreciated by the visitor—even

though his ear may not be attuned to the Kashmiri language—he hears the village belles, harvesters, craftsmen, boatmen or children recite them in happy chorus.

Many Themes

The predominant theme of folk-songs is a woman's touching plaint about her strayed lover who has deserted her. A typical love song is:

*O, you must tell me,
Where my boy has gone.
Is he a fountain in life's garden,
Or, a well of nectar, sweet and delicious?*

Spring is the colourful season when fruit trees look resplendent in their variegated blossoms and the shepherd girl addresses the Marg (a mountain meadow):

*Far off forests have all blossomed forth,
Hast thou not heard of me, my love?
Mountain lakes like Tar Sar are full of flowers,
Hast thou not heard of me, my love?*

These are but excerpts from romantic love-songs, replete with beautiful imagery, invoked by the folk bard from the lovely environs of the 'Paradise of the Indies'. The imagination of the folk bard rises to poetic heights in cradle songs. The peasant mother, comparing the apple of her eye to her loved ear-ring, recites:

*I rock thee, my ear-ring, I rock thee,
Thou art the God of Love at evening,
And the sun at early morning,
I rock thee, my ear-ring, I rock thee.*

Rural women, plying the spinning wheel, sweetly hum songs such as:

*On my mat in my home is perched my spinning wheel,
I wheel it and weave threads out of it.*

The serpentine and calm flowing river of the Happy Valley, the Jhelum, forms the just theme of the songs, like:

*O thou slow-motioned Jhelum;
For thee, let me devote my all, O Jhelum!
How great is thy stateliess!
For thee, let me devote my all, O Jhelum!*

The peasant women sing praises of the majestic tree of Kashmir, the Chinar, whose beautiful leaf recurs in the lovely motifs of the Valley's manifold art products:

*To me, O Chinar, leaf, my love has sent thee,
My all, O Cupid, shall I sacrifice for thee,
Thou, art, Chinar leaf, a prince of beauty,
My all, O Cupid, shall I sacrifice for thee.*

Saffron of Kashmir is well-known in song and legend. The saffron fields of Pampore, in the vicinity of Srinagar, are famous. While picking the saffron flowers, peasants—men and women—sing:

*Towards Pampore went away my darling,
Saffron flowers caught him in fragrant embrace.
O, he is there, and ah me! I am here,
When, where, O God, would I see his face?*

The labouring folk enjoy the loved product of their toil, but soon the usufruct goes to the contractor's store, and they feel the poignant separation of the enchanting flower:

*How pink is saffron's colour;
Collecting it into heaps we are bathed in sweet,
Soon, too soon, it will be hurried to the city,
Enjoy, its glorious view, O Samad,
How pink is saffron's colour!*

The touching refrain of the song is reminiscent of the wonderful view of the saffron blossom which is enthralling in full moon or at sunrise or sunset.

Saffron-pilferers, actual or aspirant, lustily shout the humorous doggerel:

*At Pampore are the saffron fields,
Bare-footed I shall steal saffron;
My Pir lives at Vijibrar,
Why should I run there?*

The incomparable beauty of the saffron flower excites the folk- bard to sing the village belle's conceit:

*Proud of thyself art thou,
O saffron flower!
Far lovelier than thee am I'
O saffron flower!*

Of Wedding, etc.

The wedding songs (Vanvun) are sung by Muslim and Hindu women in villages and towns, but there are differences between the two in diction, etc. The Muslim songs are weighted with Persian words, whereas those of the Hindus have some Sanskrit vocabulary and the tunes recall Vedic chants, which is specially true of the Yagnopavit (sacred thread ceremony) and Hindu wedding songs. The dirges (Van) of Hindus and Mus-

lims—again, sung by women—present similar differences of diction and style.

In a Muslim wedding song, the bridegroom's mother lead the chorus:

*You pretty damsels, stay here tonight,
O do sing in honour of the Sultan of India,
His wife's people claim him as their own,
But I shall decorate his bed with mica.*

The beauty of the bride is sung by the rustic muse in befitting terms:

*Our belle is robed in muslin,
O maid! who has dressed you?
Your teeth are so many pearls,
Who has delved them from the sea?
You are a dealer in gems,
O maid! who has dressed you?*

In another marriage song, the bride's mother welcomes the bridegroom:

*Live long, O groom, live long,
O come up our stairs,
I shall adorn thy sword with the lotus,
O come up our stairs.*

Whereas the apricot is the symbol of the bride, the rose is the emblem of the bridegroom in a wedding song which is at the same time a prayer:

*May this rose blossom forth, O God!
And may this blessed stramlet run on, O God!*

The Barat (marriage procession) invites analogies with royal occasions:

*This Durbar (family) is blessed for the first time,
Today the Sarkar (i.e., the bride's father) await the Barat,
He hardly believes his eyes,
God has blessed him.*

The Muslim girl, about to sign the Nikah (marriage contract) is told to be "wary" to "what is written down," and she is advised:

*Pampered child give up pranks now,
You are our houri,
But, as daughter, you are another's property.*

The birth of a son is an occasion that calls for festivities and songs among the Hindus and Muslims. Joyous songs recall the Hindu mother's travails, culminating in the happy event :

*To beget you, I observed fasts on Chaturdashis and Sundays,
Suffering tribulations, I bore you for eight months,
In the ninth month was born my darling;
I called you Barkhordar (the filial one),
Greetings poured in from all aides,
And we started feasting everybody;
On the third day, I roasted 20 kilos of linseed in butter and fruit,
And sent presents and greetings to my parents.
What delicacies didn't I cook?
For you I procured lovely clothes,
And gave alms to Brahmins and astrologers.*

The Muslim song, celebrating the birth of a son, runs thematically on the same lines, except that the Chaturdashi (14th day of the lunar fortnight) fast and Brahmins are not mentioned, and the conclusion is different:

*When you were born, I thanked Allah,
I whispered the secret of Islam in your ears,
And named you Diljan (darling).*

The Mundan (a child's first hair cutting) ceremony is the occasion for songs in which the child is idolised and adored:

*We will crop your hair with a golden razor,
King of Misr (Egypt), I sacrifice myself for thee,
We will load you with precious jewels,
And bedeck your (hairless) chin with pearls.*

Romantic ballads, originally sung by the peasantry, and passed on by word of mouth, have had and continue to have universal appeal among the Kashmiri folk. Many lines from these are on the lips of villagers. They sing the highly contemplative lines from Shirin Khusroo balled:

*Maddened by bewitching Shirin,
Khusroo went to batter the mountain.
To whom did this world prove faithful?
Alas, who killed you, you lost one?*

The legendary, lovers Himat and Nagiray, the typical folk-tale of Kashmir, are recalled in a wedding song, the couple compared to them:

*Nagiray will take is seat on the golden carpet,
And take away Himat in the jewelled palanquin.*

Or, the bridegroom may be addressed effusively, the Nagiray analogy kept up affectionately:

*The rose has bloomed in the spring,
Darling, who led you over here?
Nagiray has come for Himal,
Waving your tuft, you enter our gate,
Which way did you come, Bombur (bee), for the rose?
I will swing you in the cradle,
I have illuminated the house for you,
And bedecked Himal for you.*

Ruf (or, dance) songs are delightful to watch and hear when groups of girls or women stand in rows, facing each other. Interlinking their arms round each other's waist, they move forwards and backwards, giving themselves a heaving motion. They may recite only a couplet in chorus, like:

*Awake, awake, O sweet hyacinth,
Come on, let us dance, O sweet hyacinth!*

Dirges are sung by women in chorus after the death of a fairly old person in the family. The poignant humour of a dirge can be telling as in:

*The Hakim came and came, the patient (seemingly) improved,
The pyre will be made from sandal wood.*

There is a rich variety of pastoral songs which are simple and chaste, and acquire a singular charm when sung in chorus by village belles during the harvesting season, when nature is replete with her bounties. Folklorists divide pastoral songs of Kashmir into two categories—those sung in Kashmiri by the shepherds of Kashmir, and the ones recited by Gujjars in their own dialect. The bounties of the spring and the mountain

meadows in blossom are the favourite topics of the pastoral songs. Cowboys and shepherdresses—whether Kashmiris of the Valley or Gujjars tending their flocks in upland meadows—returning with their herds in the evenings, also sing these songs, singly or in chorus.

The unique characteristic of intricate vowel sounds coupled with liquid consonants of the Kashmiri language is reflected in its folk-songs, rendering them sweet in tone and alliterative in form. The simplicity of the theme of the folk-songs is matched by the imaginative poetic fervour, and no definite verse forms have hampered the inspiration of the poet of the people.

The Himalayan Muse sings through the folk-songs of Kashmir, fresh, lucid and chaste, and rich in rhythm and vitality. The tender-footed Kashmiri belles, singing the dance-songs at harvest time or on festive occasions, and dancing the Ruf in rhythmic movement with inter-locked arms, evince the physical expression of the inner response of Kashmiris to the joy and beauty of nature around them. In their dance and song, as well as in the folk-tales, are thus embodied the heritage of Kashmir's dynamic though chequered past and the spirit of beauty vibrating through the sublime and the variegated, bountiful aspects of the Himalayan mountain and meadow.

CHAPTER 36

FOLK-SONGS OF KASHMIR

By
S.N. Dhar

Kashmiri, the vernacular of Kashmir, has descended from Sanskrit. Actually Kashmiri is a very old language. During Muslim rule, it was enriched by Persian diction, and later on, in the modern period, Urdu and Hindi have been influencing it considerably. Kashmiri has had a rich literature. It yet lives in its songs, the folk-songs, which form a veritable "literature of the people" of Kashmir. In the Golden Valley, with its abundant beauties of nature and man, it was but natural for some unknown hoary folk-bard to have started the immortal vogue of folk-songs.

Folk-songs in Kashmir preserve the myths, customs, traditions and legends of bygone days. Thanks to Sir George Grierson, Sir Aurel Sein, Rev. J. Hinton, Knowles, and Prof. Devendra Satyarthi, Kashmiri folklore has been revived. The songs are current in every rural home in Kashmir. Rural itinerant minstrels usually carry a Dahra, an iron rod with loose iron rings on it, and when they sing folk-songs, they shake the rings skilfully up and down so as to produce a pleasing jingle. These minstrels have mostly passed on the folk-songs by word of mouth down through the ages.

Kashmiri folk-songs present considerable variety in theme, content and form. They can be broadly classified into opera and dancing songs, pastoral lore, romantic ballads, play-songs,

semi- mystical songs etc. Then there are other songs sung during particular seasons or in accompaniment to certain occupations. Boatmen, labourers, seed-sowers, harvesters, embroiderers, papier-mache makers, milk-men, saffron-reapers, shepherds, village belles fetching water, grinding, stacking or weeding paddy, sing their different melodious folk-songs in chorus. Yet others are sung as lullabies or cradle-songs, or at the birth and the naming of a child or at its circumcision or sacred thread ceremonies. Then there are wedding songs sung in chorus by women at and before marriage ceremonies. Dirges, popularly known as Van, are sung in chorus by the women after the death of old persons in the family.

The predominant theme of folk-songs is a woman's touching plaint about her strayed lover who has deserted her. Here is a typical love song:

*"O, you, must tell me
Where my boy has gone.
Is he a fountain in life's garden,
Or, a well of nectar, sweet and delicious?"*

The last two lines evince the power of exquisite imagery of the unknown folk-bard. These love songs are chaste, simple and pathetic. The lovesick maiden consoles herself in these words:

*"My love is out to tend his goats,
And he must be weaving a garland there;
A garland of fresh, dewy, sosan flowers,
For me, ye maidens."*

The serpentine and calmly flowing river of the Valley, the Jhelum, forms the just theme of folk-songs:

"O thou slow-motioned Jhelum!

*For thee, let me devote my all, O Jhelum!
How great is thy stateliness!
For thee, let me devote my all, O Jhelum!"*

Kashmiri peasant women sing praises of the majestic and beautiful tree of Kashmir—the chinar. The beauty of its leaf is thus sung:

*"To me, O chinar leaf, my love has sent thee,
My all, O cupid, shall I sacrifice for thee.
Thou art, O chinar leaf, a prince of beauty,
My all, O Cupid shall I sacrifice for thee."*

Saffron is one of the most beautiful products of Kashmir. Saffron fields of Pampur, at a distance of 8 miles from Srinagar, are famous. Peasants, both men and women, sing exquisite folk-songs while picking saffron flowers. A part of a love song is:

*"Towards Pampur went away my darling,
Saffron flowers caught him in fragrant embrace,
'O, he is there and ah me! I'm here
When, where, O God, would I see his face?"*

A village girl may sing a conceit in sweet tones;

*"Proud of thyself art thou,
O saffron flower!
Far lovelier than thee am I.
O saffron flower!"*

The labouring folk hardly enjoy the loved product of their labour or its usufruct, which goes to the contractor's store and they feel the poignant separation of the enchanting flower, as they express in:

*"How pink is saffron's colour!
Collecting it into heaps we are bathed in sweat,
Soon, too soon, it will be hurried to the city.
Enjoy its glorious view, O Samad,
How pink is saffron's colour!"*

The touching refrain of the song is reminiscent of the wonderful view of the saffron blossom which is especially charming in full moon or at sunrise or sunset.

Saffron-pilferers, actual or aspirant, lustily shout the humorous doggerel:

*"At Pampore are the saffron fields,
Bare-footed I shall steal saffron;
My Pir lives at Vijibrar,
Why should I run there?"*

Though the poor Kashmiri peasants may not afford to use the shawl, Kashmir's world-famous product of art, but they spin its wool and love its beauty. The bride happily sings:

*"Shawl-wool shall I spin with my own hands,
And shall get it dyed in saffron colour."*

In a wedding-song the bridegroom's mother leads the chorus;

*"You pretty damsels, stay here to-night,
Oh! do sing in honour of the Sultan of India.
His wife's people claim him as their own,
And I shall decorate his bed with mica."*

The marriage ceremony is preceded by the so-called "Henna Night", when the hands and feet of the bride and

bridegroom are dyed in henna, while women sing chorus songs far into the night:

*"We congratulate you on your 'Henna night',
You have been blessed with God's mercy.
May you be safe from danger and accidents,
May God remove your difficulties."*

The beauty of the bride is fitly sung by the rustic muse in such songs:

*"Our belle is robed in muslin,
Oh maid! who has dressed you?
Your teeth are so many pearls,
Who has delved them from the sea"?*

The bride's mother and her relatives sing:

*"Live long, O groom, live long,
O come up by our stairs.
I will adorn thy sword with the lotus,
O come up by our stairs."*

The rose is the emblem of the bridegroom in another wedding prayer:

*"May this rose blossom forth, O God!
And may this streamlet of blessing run on, O God!"*

Spring is the season when fruit trees look resplendent in their variegated blossoms and the shepherd girl addresses, the Marg, a meadow:

*"Far-off forests have all blossomed forth,
Hast not thou heard of me, my Love?"*

*Mountain lakes like Tar Sar are all full of flowers,
Hast not thou heard of me, my Love?"*

Not unoften do rural women work at the spinning-wheel. To the accompaniment of this simple occupation, they sweetly hum songs, such as:

*"On my mat in my home is perched my spinning-wheel,
I wheel it and weave threads out of it."*

The imagination of the folk rises to poetic heights in the cradle songs. The peasant mother, comparing her darling to her ear-ring, her loved ornament, sings:

*"I rock thee, my ear-ring, I rock thee,
Thou art the God of Love at evening,
And the sun at early morning,
I rock thee, my ear-ring, I rock thee."*

All these kinds of folk-lore contain the essentials of folk songs in that they have been verbally communicated from one generation of rustic and pastoral bards, minstrels and the peasantry in general, to the other generation, and that they are sung at labour, dance, play or traditional ceremonies or craft-occupations. The unique characteristic of intricate vowel sounds coupled with liquid consonants of the Kashmiri language is reflected in its folk-songs, rendering them sweet in tone and alliterative in form. The simplicity of theme and content of folk-songs is matched by their imaginative, poetic fervour. No definite verse-forms have hampered the poetic inspirations of the rustic Muse. The exquisite singing quality of the folk-songs is appreciated by even the ear of the foreigner.

Romantic ballads, originally sung by the peasantry, and passed on verbally, have had and continue to have universal appeal among the Kashmiri folk. Many a line from folk-tales

are on the lips of villagers. They sing the highly contemplative lines from Shirin Khusroo:

*"Maddened by bewitching Shirin,
Khusroo went to batter the mountain.
To whom did this world prove faithful?
Alas, who killed you, you lost one?"*

In a wedding-song, the new couple may be compared to the legendary lovers, Himal and Nagrai thus:

*"Nagai will take his seat on the golden carpet
And shall take away Himal in the pearly palanquin!"*

Dirges are sung by women in chorus after the death of fairly old persons in the family. Their poignant humour is touching as in:

*"The Hakim came and came, the patient (seemingly) improved,
The pyre will be made of sandal wood."*

Ruph or Dance Songs are delightful to hear when groups of girls or women stand in lines, interlocking their arms round each other's waist and heave forwards and backwards, giving themselves a wavy motion. They will sing only a couplet in chorus, for instance:

*"Awake, awake, O sweet hyacinth,
Come on let us dance, O sweet hyacinth."*

This couplet is melodiously repeated over and over again—producing and excellent effect of rhythm.

The peasant-day folk-lore has not substantially added to the past, rich folk-lore of Kashmir. Like most folk-lore it is not high in point of prosody, but, what matters is, that it is spon-

taneous and through it vibrates the very life of the masses of Kashmir, whose simple habits, bygone customs, loved traditions and past and present agrarian life are fitly mirrored in it. It throws open vast fields of activity for sustained research, so that it may be preserved, revived and rendered dynamic.

(1945).

CHAPTER 37

FOLK-SONGS

By
S.N. Dhar

DOGRI FOLK-SONGS

The Dogra is strongly attached to his 'lovely Dogra land'. Many of the Dogri songs are replete with romantic descriptions of nature and man, like the following popular folk-songs:

*Behold our lovely Dogra land,
O friend, behold our glorious land!*

*Groups of lion-hearted men,
And women, the very incarnation of Durga and Chandi,
Behold our glorious land!*

*Colourful country of green ranges, joy and happiness.
The lovely hills of Chamba and Bhales,
Behold our glorious land!*

*Beautiful girls, growing to maturity like the waking moon,
Fed on the nectar of springs and streamlets,
Behold our glorious land!*

*Twisting streams,
Rippling like serpents in the embrace of towering mountains,*

*And the milky Tawi,
Flowing down with serpentine bends,
Behold our glorious land!*

*Exquisite lakes, of Mansar and Sanasar,
Behold in every home,
Maidens of beauty like the full moon;*

*For centuries bards and minstrels have sung
Praises of our glorious Dogra land!*

A lover who is indifferent to love as well as the people's martial tradition is aroused to action in a song, whose poignancy (of rejected love) and rhythmic grace can match with the best English love lyric. Here is the translation of the lyric whose touching refrain is *O maria patliao manuan* (O my tender, tender love)—

*O my tender, tender Love.
What has been said or done
To make you angry with one
Who can reconcile and is won,
O my tender tender Love?*

*Sweet unrest and sleepless vigils,
Desires that did not take up cudgels,
To me your charming words are puzzles,
O my tender, tender Love.*

*Sweet suchian served with a delicious dish
But at lunch time you to Mandi rush;
Can you imagine how my tears gush,
O my tender, tender Love?*

*Lazily lie your sword and shield
And armour hangs on the peg unappealed,
Even war-bombs fail to fly you to the field,
O my tender, tender Love*

(Suchian, served in the kitchen, is balanced with the heroic story of the Mandi and its heroic denizens to excite the inert lover.)

KISHTWARI FOLK-SONGS

A Mystic song

*A person comes alone and goes alone,
What kind of scene turns you on?
The blowing of the wind bends flower trees,
But stronger wind destroys the whole thing.*

*Stones, earth and wooden beams collected,
The mason is engaged to construct the house.
One could spend so much that one loses count,
Even after that the builder is burnt on a few planks of wood.*

*Laughing, playing, some dancing and singing,
Death, shedding tears, nobody asks, nobody listens.
Whatever God ordains shall happen,
Not even a scratch takes place without His will.*

A Folk ghazal

*Who consumes whose bounty,
Depends on each one's luck.
Whatever you do makes your Destiny,
The good do good and the evil do wrongs.
Some live whimpering and grumbling,
Others have a smooth sailing in life.*

*One may have observed things of the earth,
But who has seen anything that is beyond?
The broad-minded give away things freely,
The non-givers frighten away the supplicants,
The young or old succumb to death,
Just as autumn glitter fades and water extinguishes fire.
All alone you have come, all alone you go,
Guest of two days, you reap what you have sown.*

'My Own Land'

*Beautiful Kishtwar, you are my country,
Saffron fields crown you, my own land.*

*River Chenab washes your feet everyday,
Mountain peak, called Nagin Sheru,
Keeps you cool, my own land.
Beautiful Kishtwar, you are my country!*

*The world accepts you as the crown,
So many kings ruled this land,
And held resplendent court.
Beautiful Kishtwar, you are my country!*

*When there were communal riots all around,
You stood out as a beacon,
An emblem of communal harmony.
Beautiful Kishtwar, you are my country!*

*At dawn I adore your landscape,
A land with a lovely waterfall like Putinag,
I sacrifice myself at your feet.
Beautiful Kishtwar, you are my country!*

A Love Lyric

*I cannot imagine who has complained against me,
 Ill will has been created all over,
 By people speaking against me,
 I have lost my slumber and my peace of mind.*

*I cannot tolerate your separation any more,
 I feel as if my eyes are overwhelmed,
 By an eclipse darker than any,
 It looks as if sparks are flashing out of my head.*

*I have never hidden my deep love for you,
 Day and night I am immersed in your thoughts,
 I offer my heart to you,
 I dedicate my whole self to you and you alone.*

*It just occurred to me, I feel your presence,
 We will walk together,
 My wishes will come true,
 If you will stay for some time only.*

*You partly showed me your face and hid it,
 You give a patient hearing to my love songs,
 Let me have a view of your beautiful face,
 So that I feel the intoxication of wine!*

Patriotic song

*We are Hindustanis and Hindustan is ours,
 We were born and grew up here,
 It kindles the star of peace,
 Smiling faces, twisted moustaches, proud eyebrows.*

Hindus, Kashmiris, Sikhs, are blended with one another.

*We embrace each other,
And the enemy gets jealous.
Temples, mosques, churches have songs of their own.*

*Pat the back of these Jawans who sacrificed their lives.
Who went to gallows, smiles on their faces.
Suffering hardships they never uttered a word,
At last the red monkeys (the British) had to flee, hiding their
tails,*

*We became independent, after the martyrs were wrapped in cof-
fins,
We do whatever we wish and brings us happiness,
We are not scared or afraid,
We have our own Raj.*

*Everyone, male or female, has the rights now,
One voice, determination and faith, in young and old,
Those who look at us with evil intention,
Shall be the target of our attack.*

LADAKHI FOLK-SONGS

The Dard song about the Origin of the Earth

*How did the earth first grow?
At first the earth grew on a lake.
What grew on the water?
On the water grew a meadow.
What grew on the meadow?
Three hills grew there.*

*What are the names of the three hills?
The name of one hill is the "White Jewel Hill."
What is the name of another hill?*

The name of another hill is the "Red Jewel Hill."

What is the name of the one remaining hill?

The name of the one remaining hill is the "Blue Jewel Hill."

What grew on the three hills?

Three trees grew there.

What are the names of the three trees?

The name of one tree is the "White Sandal Tree,"

The name of another is the "Blue Sandal Tree,"

The name of the one remaining tree is the "Red Sandal Tree."

What grew on the three trees?

Three birds grew on the three trees.

What is the name of the one bird?

The name of the bird is "Wild Eagle."

What is the name of another bird?

The name of another bird is "Bamdoor Hen."

What is the name of the one remaining bird?

The name of the one remaining bird is "Blackbird."

Other Ladakhi Folk-Songs

A song from the ancient epic of King Nyima-gon reads:

Oh Father Nyima-gon

Do not go a-hunting

In my dream last night

I saw something bad in my dream.

I, a boy, had to die,

I saw the colour of blood on my golden saddle.

I shall no more dance to the sound of trumpets and clarinets.

Oh king, do not go a-hunting,

Thy son Zlava-gon has to die.

The history of Ladakh furnishes interesting songs. Minister Ngorub Standzin composed his hymn in honour of King Tsepal. The hymn is graphic:

*Through perfect good fortune
The happiness containing garden Karzo,
Not being built, came into existence by itself.
It is the house of the gods and the sun.
Having in the zenith of the clear sky,
Sun and moon like umbrellas, so it arose.
It is a wonderfully pleasing sight;
It is like a fine room with pairs of pillars,
Within, on a lion's throne,
Sits Nyatri-tsanpo's family;
That is the king of faith, Tsepal, and with mother and son.
May their feet on the lotus stand one hundred cycles of years!
On this magnificent high nut-tree
Male and female birds sing melodious songs.*

The following is a passage from the song 'Prince Chogsprul's fight':

*The sun is rising, the warm sun of the East;
He is rising on the summit of the good palace of three-fold happiness.
May the pure rays of the sun fall on the great town of Leh
with the three courts of government!
When I, a boy, lived in my fatherland, I was surrounded by the
servants, inside and outside the palace.
When Chogsprul lived in the great town of Leh, the number of
his servants was like the stars of heaven.
When I, a boy, went to a foreign country, I was alone with my
horse.*

When Chogsprul went to Spiti, we were only one man and one horse.

When we went across all the large and little plains, I was so thirsty that I humbly prayed for water.

When I, a boy, was still in my fatherland, I had always a pair of teapots, like the sun and moon.

Then I, a boy, went to sleep under a cedar tree....

SONG OF A MON MUSICIAN

The Tibetan Fiddle

*Do not think that my fiddle, called Trashi Wanggyal,
Does not possess a great father,
If the divine wood of the pencil cedar
Is not its great father, what else?*

(Refrain)

*Do not think that my fiddle, called Trashi Wanggyal,
Does not possess a little mother!
If the strings from the goat,
Are not its little mother, what else?*

(Refrain)

*Do not think my fiddle, called Trashi Wanggyal
Does not possess any brothers!
If the ten fingers of my hand
Are not its brothers, what else?*

(Refrain)

*Do not think that my fiddle, called Trashi Wanggyal,
Does not possess any friends!
If the sweet sounds of its own mouth
Are not its friends, what else?*

(Refrain)

Refrain

Shah Shah ma zhig Shah Shah ma zig,

Tse sang ma zhig sang mol.

MORE LADAKHI FOLK-SONGS

'Our lucky son'

*The wheel fortune turned, unaccountably, suddenly,
A boy, who was poor and dressed in rags,
Became rich, so rich that he didn't know,
How to spend his wealth—a headache to him.*

Addressing him, his parents admonished him:

*"Our lucky son, realised your good days have come,
Look, the brocades of China that you could only dream about
Clothe you now and some of the attire trails behind your feet.*

*"You wear the velved cap that you had never seen before.
In this head-gear and dress you look more beautiful than a
bridegroom.*

*The shawl that you are wearing is whiter than the white
clouds—*

A shawl that you couldn't have put on even in a dream.

*"The sash you let trail to the floor,
Is made of the finest fabric from Lhasa,
And yet you couldn't have dreamt of it,
In days gone by.*

*"The dagger inlaid with gems and the
painted pen-box set on your belt,
Wherefrom could you have secured these fineries?
Our lucky son, you are dressed like a bridegroom."*

A belle sings

I am the daughter of a big father,

*I shall roam my blessed land.
 I will buy all the precious stones,
 The Pherozas and other stones that fill my land.
 Em Ezzo! Em Ezzo; Ha, Ha, Ha!*

*My mountains are high, sky-kissing,
 In their bowels are the Pheroza mines,
 I bought the gems to deck my Perak,
 Thus beautifully accoutred, I'll dance.
 Em Ezzo! Em Ezzo! Ha, Ha, Ha!*

*Shigatse! Shigatse look at my Perak,
 See how bewitchingly it sits on my head.
 Me, the daughter of a big father,
 I'll dance around your mountains.
 Em Ezzo! Em Ezzo! Ha, Ha, Ha!*

A Love Lyric

*Enclosed by walls, the garden is like Eden;
 Inside it is a pond of milk.
 A flower-laden pavilion is in the pond;
 A shy princess is in the pavilion.*

*If that valiant hero comes to the palace,
 I will be the doorman at the gate.
 I shall look out the window,
 If he comes to my locality.*

*If my beloved tends to forget me,
 I will make him take a pledge (on a holy book)
 Not to forget me.*

A cat is crossing the Thangskam bridge,

*The cat may go on or no,
I will not,
For my life is precious.*

Ladakhi caravan in Tibet

*The finest lamb wool from Rodak I have brought,
I make a Chuga for him out of this expensive wool,
People were happy to see him in this fine dress.*

*Their saddles poised on Chinese carpets, the caravan,
Loaded with food supply, headed for Rodak.
When the caravan reached Rodak, the Tibetan folks told them,
"Look around, we have beautiful snow-capped mountains"
Ladakhis rejoined, "We have ponds full to the brim with oil ex-
tracted from the kernels of apricots."*

*One party asked the other; "What will you serve us once we
are in your land?"*

Tibetans said: "We will feast you on the best of our butter."

*Ladakhis said: "We will make the finest dishes for you from the
oil of the apricot kernels."*

Ladakh caravan folks tell the Tibetans, appreciatively,

"We are happy to see your land; it is really worth living in,

"It is high like the horns of a yak, it is beautiful and durable."

Tibetans say, "The gate of our fort is made of iron,

It is impregnable; no one can break through it."

To this Ladakhis aver, "The gate of our fort,

Is made of magnetic iron; it pulls the weapons of our enemies."

*Seeing Ladakhis accompanied by Singhal Namgel, who was a
Raja,*

Tibetans say, "You folks are lucky and prosperous,

A Raja accompanies your caravan; your laws are just."

The Tibetans commented thus, for their own laws are harsh ;

*They wrap people in animal hides and throw them out to die.
The Raja of Ladakh observed: "In our land all folks are equal."*

Ali Hassan

*Rakhasheer village is in the centre of our land,
Constructed by Khoja Ali Hassan is a mosque of gold,
In the upper dome of the mosque,
There is something like a golden cock that crows at dawn,
It isn't? cock but it is a man,
The one who says the Azan, he is Khoja Rasul.*

*We are all collecting in Bapzee polo ground to watch the game.
The famous polo player, Khoja Ali Hassan, brought his team,
They played against the team from Muqla and defeated them,
Ali Hassan's team won but the opponents became his enemies.
His fame as a great polo player spread beyond Ladakh,
Zorawar Singh invited him to the Kashmir court.*

*Ali Hassan set out for Kashmir but a terrible storm broke out
at La-tien Lo-tien,
Ali Hassan prayed to God to subside the storm; it abated.
He reached Kashmir—and had the Ali Masjid constructed there;
Secured Pheroze stones for inlay work of the mosque.
He also constructed a mosque in Idgah maidan.*

*The people congregated at Ali Masjid, when it was ready, for
Nimaz,
Ali Hassan did the Waizkhani and the folks were inspired.
Thereafter he was called to the Kashmir Durbar and honoured.
Ali Hassan conversed with the nobles,
His voice stood out amongst the courtiers even as the parrot's
does.*

Action at Bazgo

*Three eagles are hovering over the tall palace of Bazgo,
These are no ordinary eagles but are my guardian deities,
In reality these are the guardian of Shalipa.*

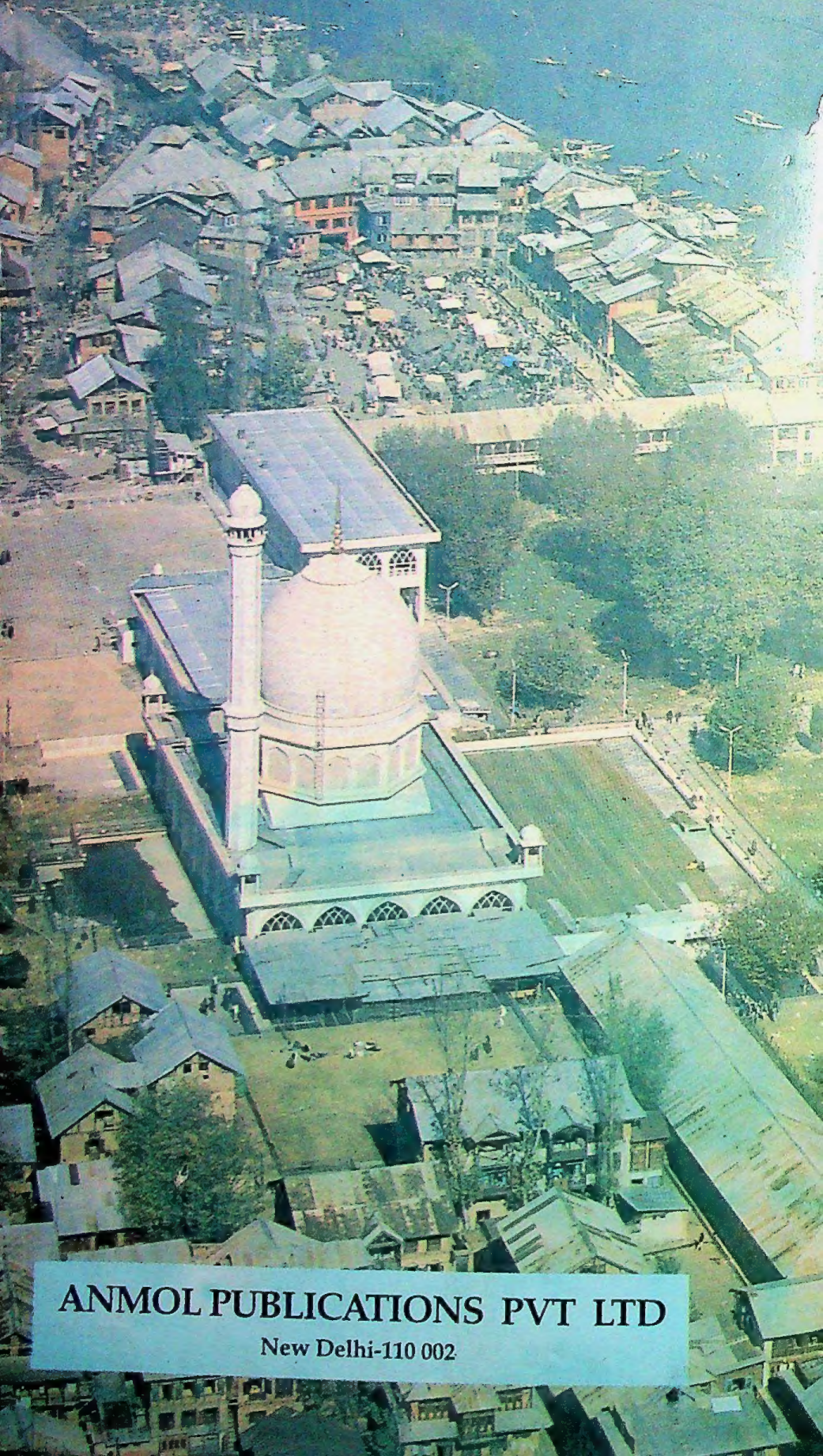
*Mongolian soldiers are preparing to lay the siege,
Right from the summit of Laganz Kaze,
Aba Shalipa fixed the Bongsook cannon ;
With continuous fire from the cannon, he finished the Mon-
golian army.*

*Everyone including Aba Shalipa was happy.
From Bazgo's high palace, the uncle threw an arrow,
It hit a Mughal Soldiers's cup and he reeled under the shock.
During the action, Shali Zom Zom walked
Towards the river and fled from there.
As for me, I have stuck to my post.*

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